DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 060 CE 083 303

AUTHOR	Duxbury, Linda; Higgins, Chris
TITLE	Work-Life Balance in the New Millennium: Where Are We? Where Do We Need To Go? CPRN Discussion Paper.
INSTITUTION	Canadian Policy Research Networks Inc., Ottawa (Ontario).
SPONS AGENCY	Human Resources Development Canada, Ottawa (Ontario).
REPORT NO	CPRN-DP-W/12
PUB DATE	2001-10-00
NOTE	93p.; The 1991 and 2001 surveys were funded by the National Health Research and Development Program (NHRDP), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), National Centre for Management Research and Development (NCMRD) and Health Canada. Project also funded by Nestle Canada Inc.
AVAILABLE FROM	For full text: http://www.cprn.com/docs/work/wlb_e.pdf.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Change Strategies; Employed Parents; *Employer Employee Relationship; *Employment Practices; *Family Work Relationship; Foreign Countries; Government Role; Job Performance; *Life Satisfaction; Mothers; National Surveys; Organizational Change; Organizational Climate; Organizational Effectiveness; Performance Factors; Policy Formation; Productivity; *Public Policy; Quality of Life; Role Conflict; Sex Differences; Trend Analysis; *Work Attitudes; Work Environment
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada

ABSTRACT

The effects of three types of work-life conflict in Canada were examined by using data from a set of work and family studies that were conducted in 1991 and 2001. The studies focused on the effects of the following types of conflict: (1) work overload; (2) work-to-family interference (where work gets in the way of family); and (3) family-to-work interference (where family gets in the way of work). The findings were deemed representative of the population of employees working for medium and large public and private organizations in Canada. The following are among the key findings emerging from an analysis of both datasets: (1) work-life conflict increased markedly during the 1990s; (2) parenthood remains more difficult for women than for men; (3) work-life conflict has a negative impact on organizational performance and on employees; (4) employees with high work-life conflict make more use of Canada's health care system; (5) role overload increases when role demands accumulate; and (6) work-to-family interference increases when role demands conflict. The study yielded 27 recommendations for employers, employees and their families, unions, and governments. A list of 37 publications documenting the 1991 study is appended. (Contains 65 references, 26 tables/figures, and 21 endnotes.) (MN)

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CPRN DISCUSSION PAPER

Work-Life Balance in the New Millennium: Where Are We? Where Do We Need to Go?

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by

Linda Duxbury
Chris Higgins

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CPRN Discussion Paper No. W|12

October 2001

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Work-Life Balance in the New Millennium: Where Are We? Where Do We Need to Go?

by

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Work Network
Canadian Policy Research Networks, Inc.

October 2001

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Foreword

We all complain there is too much to do, though most of us thrive on being busy. The question is when does the pace of life reach a point where it affects the quality of life and the quality of our performance at work and at home?

Over the past seven years, CPRN's Work Network has been documenting the dramatic changes in the nature of work, and the role of the new technologies. At the same time, the Family Network has documented the changing needs of families. Last year, we invited Linda Duxbury and Chris Higgins to provide a systematic analysis of the trends in Work-Life Balance. They were able to draw upon two large surveys of Canadian workers – one they did in the early 1990s, and a second one undertaken for Health Canada in 2000, which is nearing completion. Health Canada graciously consented to allow a portion of their data set to be used so that the ten-year trends could be reported here. Their forthcoming reports will give Canadians an in-depth analysis of the pervasive effects of the stress on working people.

Duxbury and Higgins have found that work-life conflict has gotten worse over the past decade. Working parents and people providing care for other dependents are even more vulnerable to work-family stress than they were in the early '90's, but the problem is much larger. Increased workloads and hours of work, and the way that technology allows us to take work home after hours are imposing a heavy load on the Canadian work force, whether they are parents or not.

So work-life balance is not just a women's issue. It also affects men. It is not just a worker issue, it affects employers because people are so over-stretched that they are not able to perform at their best. And it is not just a "business" issue, it is a significant societal challenge because of the spillover effects on personal health and family life.

I want to thank the authors for their careful documentation of the major trends in work-life balance, and we all look forward to the more in-depth reports that are to follow. This analysis will create the foundation for a serious re-think of what public policy and human resource policy can do to the stressful conditions in which Canadians are working today.

Judith Maxwell
October 2001

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Executive Summary

We all have a number of roles that we hold throughout life. Work-life conflict occurs when time and energy demands imposed by our many roles become incompatible with one another; participation in one role is made increasingly difficult by participation in another.

This paper examines the effects of three types of work-life conflict: role overload (having too much to do), work to family interference, where work gets in the way of family, and family to work interference, where family demands (such as a child or elder care) get in the way of work.

To what extent is work-life conflict a problem in Canada and what progress has been made in this area?

Some claim that work-life conflict has become less of a problem and that organizations have made progress in recent years. They in part attribute this shift to an alleged increase in corporate awareness regarding the need to focus on recruitment and retention of workers, and a perceived shift in employee attitudes towards work. It is claimed that these changes have provided an incentive for companies to make increased use of flexible and more family-friendly workplaces practices.

Others however argue that during the 1990s, an increasing number of employed Canadians experienced work-life interference. Labour market changes during the 1990s have resulted in increased job insecurity and increased work demands – all of which can be linked to heightened work-life conflict. Technological changes also have blurred the boundary between work and family.

This paper uses data from Duxbury and Higgin's 1991 and 2001 work and family studies to examine this and other related issues by asking: Has work life balance become more difficult for Canadians over the decade? How does work-life balance affect quality of life and organizational performance? What factors have the biggest impact on achieving balance? What can be done to help employees balance the demands of work and family?

The findings presented in this paper can be assumed to be representative of the population of employees working for medium and large public and private organizations across Canada.

The 1990s Was a Decade of Change, but Many Changes were for the "worse"

The 1990's were a decade of change. Work-life conflict has increased markedly (particularly role overload), suggesting that a greater proportion of workers are experiencing greater challenges in balancing their role of employee, parent, spouse, eldercare giver etc. Workers have become more stressed, physical and mental health has declined, and so has satisfaction with life. Employee's attitudes towards their jobs and employers have also changed over the decade. On the whole, jobs have become more stressful and less satisfying, and employees are less committed to their employer and are more likely to be absent from work due to ill health. Employees are also devoting a greater amount of time to work at the office, often extending their work day by bringing work home.

All three aspects of work-life conflict – role overload, work to family and family to work interference – have increased, and no demographic group appears to have been left unscathed.

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Role overload has shown the steepest increases. This finding is consistent with anecdotal and media reports illustrating that Canadians are feeling increasingly pressed for time. We attribute this increase to greater work demands, as opposed to the possibility that Canadians are spending more time with their families. Indeed, in both 1991 and 2001, respondents were more likely to meet work demands at the expense of their family than vice versa. Moreover, throughout the decade, increasing numbers of Canadian employees have made work (as opposed to family) a priority.

Parenthood Remains More Difficult for Women than Men

Despite increased awareness and attention to gender issues, motherhood continues to be more stressful than fatherhood, and mothers continue to experience greater conflict between their work and family than do fathers. In both samples, female respondents (regardless of whether they had children) reported higher levels of stress and depression than male respondents, and mothers reported higher levels of stress and depression than women without children. Parental status had little effect on reported stress and depression levels among men.

Parenthood appears to have a different effect on the life satisfaction of mothers vis-à-vis fathers. Whereas being a father appears to be linked to increased life satisfaction, for mothers the reverse seems to be true – mothers appear to be less satisfied with their lives than women without children. These differences were observed in both 1991 and 2001. Similar findings were also observed for depressed mood. In both 1991 and 2001, men and women were more likely to agree that it was the mother, as opposed to the father, who had primary responsibility for childcare in their family.

Despite labour market and social changes of the past decade, working mothers continue to experience greater difficulty balancing work and family than do fathers. Mothers reported the highest levels of role overload and family to work interference and motherhood appears to be associated with increased stress and depression, something that was not found to be the case for fathers. In fact fatherhood appears to be associated with lower levels of stress and depression, suggesting that the role of working mothers is qualitatively different from that of working fathers, and such differences have a negative effect of the former.

Work-life Conflict has a Negative Impact on Organizational Performance and on Employees

The evidence suggests that high levels of role overload and work to family interference affect organization's recruitment and retention efforts, often affecting their "bottom line." Respondents experiencing high role overload and high work to family interference were significantly less committed to their employer and tended to be less satisfied with their jobs. They also reported much higher levels of job stress, were more frequently absent from work, made more use of employee assistance programs, and more frequently gave serious consideration to quitting their job. These employees were also less likely to rate their organization as an "above average place to work."

Our research also indicates that employees who are overloaded and who put work ahead of family often experience negative repercussions at home. They report greater negative spillover from work to family, lower family satisfaction, and a greater tendency to miss family activities

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due to work demands. Moreover, lower fertility levels may be linked to high role overload and high work to family interference as such employees are more likely to say they have had fewer children, or have not started a family, because of work demands. Respondents reporting high levels of work to family conflict were also found to spend significantly less time engaged in activities commonly associated with positive parenting.

Employees with High Work-life Conflict Make More Use of Canada's Health Care System

Employees who are overloaded, or whose work interferes with family (and vice versa), are more likely to report feeling highly stressed, experience burn-out, express dissatisfaction with life, be in poorer mental and / or physical health, and more likely to forgo leisure to address work demands.

Employees in 2001 who experienced high levels of the three forms of conflict tended to make greater use of the health care system than those who reported low levels of conflict. For instance, individuals who reported high levels of conflict more frequently visited a physician or reported a hospital stay due to ill health. This suggests that the governments can help reduce health care strain and costs by promoting policies that make it easier for employees to achieve better balance between work and family.

Role Overload Increases When Role Demands Accumulate

The evidence indicates that the greater number of roles an employee has, the more likely they are to report high levels of role overload. Married employees who are in the sandwich group (that is, with childcare and eldercare responsibilities) were therefore the most likely to report high role overload. This sandwich group was followed by married employees with just childcare responsibilities and them by those with just eldercare obligations. Those least likely to experience role overload were married employees without children and those who were single and childless.

Finally, not all parents experience the same levels of role overload. High role overload seems to be negatively associated with lifecycle stage. Almost three-quarters of parents with children under the age of five report high role overload. This drops to two-thirds of parents with adolescents, and three in five parents with teenagers. By the time children hit 18, levels of parental role overload levels are virtually similar to those observed in employees without children.

Work to Family Interference Increases When Role Demands Conflict

Those groups who are at greatest risk for high work to family interference differ from those most at risk for high role overload. Whereas women are more likely than men to report high role overload, men are more likely to report high levels of work to family conflict. This finding is consistent with other research in the area suggesting that for many men, placing family ahead of work continues to be deemed a "career limiting move."

While married employees are at greater risk of high work to family interference than those who are single, the differences between parents and non-parents is not as marked as the one observed with respect to role overload. While those with preschoolers tend to experience the highest

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levels of overload, high interference from work to family appears to peak when children are in school but cannot legally be left alone and unattended. Employees with eldercare responsibilities also appear to be at high risk of experiencing high work to family interference.

Family type is also a predictor of high work to family interference. While being in a "traditional" family (i.e. homemaker spouse) seems to partially protect the male breadwinner from high levels of role overload, the data suggests that those in this family situation are at greater risk of experiencing high work to family interference. Other family types, such as those where male and female partners are not "equally" employed, are also likely to report high work to family conflict. It may be that in these families, there is less appreciation (or understanding) of what the other partner does and / or the types of support they need. Moreover, men in these families may feel extra pressure to address their family responsibilities by being successful at work.

Finally, dual-earner employees (with or without children) experience lower levels of work to family interference than those families where one or both partners are in professional positions. This finding suggests that the psychological demands associated with professional positions, and perhaps the greater desire to "get ahead," may contribute to work being placed ahead of family.

Recommendations

This study shows that different policies, practices and strategies are needed to reduce all three aspects of work-life interference. While there is no "magic bullet" solution, the evidence suggests that there are a number of ways to reduce this conflict. This report makes 27 recommendations that employers, employees and families, and government ought to pursue.

Recommendations for Employers

1. Devote more resources to improving "people management" practices within the workplace. Employees who work for a supportive manager – one who is a good communicator, focuses on output as opposed to hours – report a greater ability to balance work and family than those who have a non-supportive manager.
2. Provide employees with increased control and flexibility regarding when and where they work. Employees who enjoy such control tend report lower levels of role overload, work to family and family to work interference.
3. Create more supportive work environments by:
   - Working with employees to identify and implement the types of support they say they need, and better inform them about policies that may currently be available to them.
   - Encouraging employees to use the supports that are readily available and ensure that employees who could make use of such assistance do not feel that their career prospects would be jeopardized by doing so.
4. Give employees the explicit right to refuse overtime work. Providing employees with the ability to refuse overtime hours appears to be quite effective in reducing high role overload. This may reflect the increased ability of such employees to more easily schedule time with family or run errands.
5. Provide a limited number of annual paid leave days for personal reasons such as childcare, eldercare etc.

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6. Make it easier for employees to transfer from full-time to part-time work and vice versa. Introduce pro-rated benefits for part-time workers, guarantee a return to full-time status for those who elect to work part-time, and protect employee seniority when shifting from full to part-time work, and vice-versa.
7. Provide appropriate support for employees who work rotating shifts. Such support should be determined by consulting with those who perform shift-work. Policies that have been found to be effective include limiting split shifts, providing advanced notice of shift changes, and permitting employees to trade shifts amongst themselves.
8. Introduce initiatives to increase an employee's sense of control, perhaps through increased use of self-directed work teams, promoting meaningful employee participation in decision making and increasing and improving information sharing between management and employees.
9. Examine employee workload concerns.
10. Consider offering Employee and Family Assistance Programs.

Recommendations for Employees and Their Families

While the options for employees and families are more limited (in our opinion many families are using all available options with respect to coping), we do offer the following recommendations to individuals:

11. Take full advantage of what support policies exist within your organization.
12. Raise work-life balance issues in workplace discussions and within the community.
13. Educate yourself on how to deal effectively with stress.

Recommendations for Unions

Unions also have an important role to play in establishing family-friendly workplaces. We recommend that unions:

14. Become advocates of employee work-life balance issues by spearheading campaigns to raise public awareness of work-life issues and suggest ways in which the situation can be improved. Such advocacy should be done outside the collective bargaining process.
15. Within the collective bargaining process, unions should push for the inclusion of stronger work-life provisions with the objective of gaining new ground and benefits in this area for their membership.
16. Set up educational campaigns to:
    - increase individual worker's knowledge of work-life balance issues, and
    - give employees the tools they need to effectively deal with situations as they arise.

Recommendations for Governments

There is a need for consistency with respect to labour standards pertaining to work-life balance. Common standards would provide a starting point for organizations in developing workplace policies and practices that address work-life balance issues. We therefore suggest that governments implement legislation:

17. That clearly states that management rights do not include the implicit right to demand overtime of their employees, except in exceptional circumstances.

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18. That gives employees the right to time off in lieu of overtime pay.
19. That entitles employees to a limited number of paid days off for personal leave year. This leave should be available to them upon short notice, and employees should not be obliged justify why they need time off.

The government can provide assistance outside of legislation. We also recommend that governments:

20. Strive to be model employers. As the largest employer in the country, the federal government (and provincial and municipal counterparts) should set a positive example in the area of work-life balance. Being seen as a model employer will give governments the moral high ground to expect, and request, changes in this area from other employers.
21. Develop and implement a national child care program that addresses the needs of children of all ages.
22. Develop and implement a national elder care program.
23. Implement labour legislation that includes specific language around long-term unpaid leave for the care of a parent.
24. Make it easier for family members who wish to stay home to care for their children or elderly dependents. As it currently stands, such a choice often has negative tax implications for the family.
25. Establish and financially support community based Employee Family Assistance Programs.
26. Contribute to work-life balance initiatives by: funding research in the area, disseminating relevant information to key stakeholders, developing and offering appropriate educational programs that illustrate the bottom line impact of imbalance, and educating employees and families on how to cope with conflict.
27. Given that families who have greater financial resources are generally better able to cope, work-life conflict may be reduced by "making work pay." This could involve the use of tax credits or changes to provincial minimum wages.

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge the following individuals and groups. First, we would like to thank the agencies who funded the research cited in this report (the 1991 survey was funded by the National Health Research and Development Program (NHRDP), Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the National Centre for Management Research and Development (NCMRD); the 2001 survey was funded by Health Canada). Secondly, we would like to acknowledge the efforts of the Canadian employees who took the time to fill out the surveys. Third, we would also like to thank Adam Seddon, Graham Lowe and Judith Maxwell at CPRN for their feedback on various aspects of the research, their support throughout the report writing process and their efforts to make this report a better, more readable product. Finally, we wish to thank the three anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions and Jane Corville-Smith at Health Canada for her support and guidance.

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Introduction

This paper, done in partnership with CPRN, is an attempt to synthesize our research in the area of work-life balance to provide business and labour leaders, policymakers and academics with a more objective "big picture" view on what has happened in this area in Canada in the last decade. These data can also be used to make the case that work-life balance is an important social policy issue. This report focuses on the repercussions of work-life conflict on employees, employers and society over the past decade. It concentrates on what has changed and why such changes might have occurred. Specifically, this paper uses survey data from two national studies to answer the following questions:

- Has work-life balance become more difficult over the 1990s?
- How does work-life balance affect employees' quality of life and organizational performance?
- What workplace factors have the biggest impact on achieving or not achieving balance?
- What can be done to help employees balance the demands of work and family?
- What do the data suggest will happen if things do not change?

This analysis will help advance the development of public policy and employer strategies in this area.

As researchers we have been exploring the issue of work-life balance for the past decade.[1] This research has resulted in the compilation of a large amount of quantitative survey data on Canadian employees working in small, medium and large public, private and not-for-profit sector companies. To increase our understanding of the topic, we have also carried out numerous interviews with both managers and employees, which have resulted in an extensive set of qualitative data on work-life balance. These data have resulted in numerous publications in this area (see Appendix A).

Insights are gained by comparing work-life, employee and organizational outcome data collected in 1991 (our 1990-92 national study of work-life balance) to data collected using identical measures in 2001 (our 2000-01 national study of work-life balance [ongoing]). Documentation on the 1990-92 study is readily available (i.e., see Duxbury, Higgins, Lee and Mills, 1991; Higgins, Duxbury and Lee, 1992, Appendix A) and will not be repeated here. Data collection for the 2000-01 study funded by Health Canada began in October 2000. Just over 6,500 responses representing over 40 public, private and not-for-profit sector organizations were available for analysis purposes at the time this report was written. Full details on this study can be found in *Work Life Balance in Canada: A Status Report of the New Millennium* to be published by Health Canada in late 2001. Both samples, while not random, can be considered to be representative of the population of Canadian employees working for medium and large Canadian organizations.

This report focuses on the work-life, individual (i.e., employee) and organizational attitudes and outcomes that were measured in exactly the same way in the 1991 and 2001 surveys. The interested reader can find full details on the attitudes and outcomes being examined in this study (including definitions and the name of the scale used in the survey) in Box 1 (Work-Life Outcomes), Box 2 (Individual Outcomes), and Box 3 (Work Attitudes and Outcomes).

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Box 1
Measures in Common between 1991 Study and 2001 Study:
Work-Life Outcomes

Role Overload – Overload exists when the total demands on time and energy associated with the prescribed activities of multiple roles are too great to perform the roles adequately or comfortably. Overload was assessed in both studies using a version of the scale developed by Bohen and Viveros-Long (1981).

Work Interferes with Family – This type of role interference occurs when work demands and responsibilities make it more difficult to fulfill family role responsibilities (i.e., commitments associated with the role of spouse, parent, etc.).

Family Interferes with Work – This type of role interference occurs when family demands and responsibilities make it more difficult to fulfill work role responsibilities.

In the 2001 study, role interference was assessed using a modified version of a scale developed by Gutek, Searle and Kelpa (1991). In the 1991 study, role interference was assessed using a scale developed by Bohen and Viyeros-Long (1981). The comparison done in this study has been limited to four items that appeared in both surveys (two measuring work interferes with family, two measuring family interferes with work).

Time Spent in Childcare or Activities with Children Per Week – This measure was developed by Duxbury and Higgins and has been used in all of their research since 1991. Respondents are asked to estimate in hours per week the time spent in childcare activities and home chores.

Box 2
Measures in Common between 1991 Study and 2001 Study:
Individual Outcomes

Perceived stress was measured in both studies by means of the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS: Cohen, Kamarck and Mermelstein, 1983). The PSS was designed to assess appraisals of the extent to which one's current life situation is unpredictable, uncontrollable and burdensome.

Depressed mood was measured using a scale developed by Moos et al. (1988). These authors defined depressed mood (DM) as a state characterized by low affect and energy, and persistent feelings of helplessness and hopelessness.

Life satisfaction was operationalized in both 1991 and 2001 using the Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Emmons, Larsen and Griffin, 1985). The SWLS was designed to measure the respondent's global life satisfaction.

The paper is organized into seven parts. The first two sections of the paper provide the reader with relevant background material on the topic. Work-life balance is defined in Section 1. Section 2 puts the research into context by outlining changes within the work environment that may have had an impact on the issue of balance. Section 3 compares employees' work-life balance experiences in 1991 to their experiences today (2001), while Section 4 looks at how key demographic variables such as gender, job type, dependent care responsibilities and parental status affect work-life balance. The data included in Section 5 provide the business case for change as it looks at how high levels of work-life conflict affects individuals, organizations, families and society in general. Factors that make it more or less difficult for employees to balance work and non-work demands are identified and discussed in Section 6. Relevant conclusions and recommendations on how to support working families in the 21st century are presented in the final section of the report.

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Box 3
Measures in Common between 1991 Study and 2001 Study: Work Attitudes and Outcomes

Time in Work at Office per Week – This measure was developed by Duxbury and Higgins and has been used in all of their research since 1991. Respondents are asked to estimate in hours per week the time spent in paid employment.

Tendency to Do Supplemental Work at Home (SWAH) – This measure was developed by Duxbury and Higgins and has been used in all of their research since 1991. Respondents are asked if they had spent time in the previous week performing work at home outside of regular hours (SWAH).

Hours Spent Per Week Performing SWAH – Employees who indicated that they had spent time in SWAH were asked to estimate the number of hours per week they had spent in this activity.

Job satisfaction is the degree to which employees have a positive affective orientation toward employment. While the "facet-specific" measure of satisfaction developed by Quinn and Staines (1979) was used in both studies, it was augmented in 2001. The five items that appeared in both surveys (i.e., satisfaction with job in general, their pay, their work hours, their work schedule and their work tasks) were used in this comparison.

Organizational commitment refers to loyalty to the employing organization. The nine-item short form of the Job Commitment Scale developed by Mowday et al. (1979) was used in both studies to measure commitment.

Job stress was assessed using the Job Tension subscale of Rizzo et al.'s (1970) Work Stress Scale. The authors describe this scale as a measure of "the existence of tensions and pressures growing out of job requirements including the possible outcomes in terms of feelings or physical symptoms" (p. 481).

1.0 What Is Work^2-Life Balance?

We all play many roles: employee, boss, subordinate, spouse, parent, child, sibling, friend, and community member. Each of these roles imposes demands on us that require time, energy and commitment to fulfill. Work-family or work-life conflict occurs when the cumulative demands of these many work and non-work life roles are incompatible in some respect so that participation in one role is made more difficult by participation in the other role.

This report conceptualizes work-life conflict to include role overload (RO) (having too much to do and too little time to do it in) as well as role interference (when incompatible demands make it difficult, if not impossible, for employees to perform all their roles well). Role interference, in turn, can be divided into two factors: family to work interference (FTW) and work to family interference (WTF). In the first case, interference occurs when family-role responsibilities hinder performance at work (i.e., a child's illness prevents attendance at work; conflict at home makes concentration at work difficult). In the second case, interference arises when work demands make it harder for an employee to fulfill their family responsibilities (i.e., long hours in paid work prevent attendance at a child's sporting event, preoccupation with the work role prevents an active enjoyment of family life, work stresses spill over into the home environment and increases conflict with the family). In this sense, then, work-life conflict can be seen to have two major components: the practical aspects associated with time crunches and scheduling conflicts (i.e., an employee can not be in two different places at the same time), and the perceptual aspect of feeling overwhelmed, overloaded or stressed by the pressures of multiple roles.

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1.1 Why Should Employers and Governments Care about Employees' Work-Life Balance?

Many organizations feel that helping employees balance competing work and non-work demands is not their responsibility. Rather, they subscribe to a somewhat dated view called the "myth of separate worlds" that is based on the premise that work is work and life is life and that the domains do not overlap. Such organizations (and many employees within these organizations) argue that "it was the employee's choice to have a family so balancing competing demands is their problem not ours." Such organizations also note that they are "in the business" of increasing shareholder value and serving customers and not helping employees cope with stress.

In other organizations, employees without dependent care responsibilities (in this paper, defined as time spent performing childcare, eldercare or care for a disabled dependent) interpret "family friendly" as favoritism and complain that they are being "unfairly" or inequitably treated. Such employees feel that their colleagues with childcare or eldercare responsibilities are "getting away with less work" and that the needs of childless employees are being ignored. This backlash against "family friendly" makes it harder for organizations who wish to address the issue.

Our research (and the research of others) debunks the above preconceptions and supports an alternative hypothesis – that the inability to balance work and family is "everyone's problem." High work-life conflict negatively impacts the employer, the employees' colleagues, the employee, the employees' family, and Canadian society as a whole. From the employer's perspective, the inability to balance work and family demands has been linked to reduced work performance, increased absenteeism, higher turnover, lower commitment and poorer morale (see Section 5 for a further elaboration of this argument). Work-life conflict has also been linked to productivity decreases associated with lateness, unscheduled days off, emergency time off, excessive use of the telephone, missed meetings, and difficulty concentrating on the job. A recent study by the authors of this report estimated the direct cost of absenteeism in Canadian firms due to an inability to balance work and life at just under $3 billion per year (Duxbury, Higgins and Johnson, 1999). This same study determined that employees with high work-family conflict missed an average of 13.2 days of work per year – a substantially higher number than the 5.9 days missed by employees with low work-life conflict.

Conflict between work and family demands is also a problem for employees and their families. Our research links high work-life conflict to marital problems, reduced family and life satisfaction, and an increased incidence of perceived stress, burnout, depression (measured as depressed mood in our research) and stress-related illnesses. Often employees with families miss career opportunities when they need to put their family responsibilities ahead of their work. In addition, fatigue, work-related accidents and repetitive strain injuries are all related to long hours of work.

The current challenges facing Canada's health care system suggest that provincial and federal policymakers can ill afford to overlook the significant links between work-life conflict and physical and mental health. Although the state of health of the population in Canada is among the best in the world, this comes at a high price with respect to health expenditures. Canada devotes between 9 and 10 percent of its GDP to health. Compared to other OECD countries, only the United States spends a higher share of its GDP on health care than we do.[3] Cost-containment strategies have generated considerable concern and debate over the financing and delivery of health care services, to the point

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where many Canadians have come to view Canada's health care system as being in "perpetual crisis." Whereas it is critical that governments respond to the health care "crisis" by continuing to explore new ways of achieving efficiencies, it may be equally important to step back from the debate in order to investigate ways of reducing the demand for health care services in the first place. A recent study by the authors (Duxbury, Higgins and Johnson, 1999) found that the extra trips to the doctor made by employees with high work-life stress cost at least $425 million annually. Our 2001 survey shows that people with high work-life conflict also make more hospital visits, have more hospital stays and more medical tests, make more use of other medical practitioners (i.e., nurses, physiotherapists, psychologists) and spend more on prescription drugs. Thus reducing the level of work-life conflict among Canada's workforce may represent an important step toward improving the health of Canadians and reducing health care expenditures.

Other research also suggests that society will benefit if employees are able to devote more time and energy to their roles of parent, neighbor and volunteer. Both families and communities will benefit if people have the time and energy to develop meaningful relationships with their neighbors and actively participate in the lives of their spouses and children. As the Vanier Institute (2000, p. 84) states:

> Each person in the labour force, when considered as a family member, is a vital strand in the web of relationships that sustain not just the economy but also our families, our communities and our nation.

2.0 Work-Life Balance Through the 1990s

Fourteen years ago the Hudson Institute caught the attention of the business world with its publication of *Workforce 2000* (Johnston and Packer, 1987), a compelling description of anticipated changes in the work world and in workforce demographics. Well, it is now 2001 and many of the changes predicted in *Workforce 2000* have indeed materialized. As predicted, the workforce of the new millennium is quite different from the one organizations are used to managing (i.e., the male dominated workforce of the past). The new workforce is older, more ethnically diverse, and has a larger proportion of working women, working mothers, dual-income families, employees with responsibilities for the care of aging parents, fathers with dependent care responsibilities, and sandwich employees (i.e., those with both childcare and eldercare responsibilities).

In a growing number of dual-income families, employees of both sexes are now juggling with caregiving and household responsibilities that were once managed by a stay-at-home spouse. Such employees are not well served by traditional "one-size fits all" human resource policies, which can impose rigid time and place constraints. Traditional promotional practices, which reward long work hours at the expense of personal time, often generate stress, and detract from the pleasures of parenting and the enjoyment of personal life. Similarly, organizational cultures that focus on "doing more with less," presence versus performance, hours rather than output, where work is done not how much work is done, and dictate that work takes priority over family and life make it difficult for many employees to achieve a balance.

The declining labour pool and skills shortages (also predicted in 1987 by Johnson and Packer) have meant that organizations are now competing for a shrinking number of skilled employees who have

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a different set of priorities, and accordingly, new attitudes toward work and the role it should play in their lives (Duxbury, Dyke and Lam, 2000). In many areas, the demand for labour now exceeds the supply. This trend, more than any other, has awakened employers to the business risks inherent in ignoring the needs of this new workforce; a need that includes balance and places a high priority on a meaningful life outside of work (Duxbury, Dyke and Lam, 2000).

The following section provides a brief overview of some of the key environmental influences that employees and their families have had to contend with during the 1990s. As such, it will serve to situate our discussion on shifts in work-life balance throughout the decade. Two theses are presented in the following section. In 2.1, arguments as to why work-life conflict and stress should have increased throughout the decade are advanced. This is followed in 2.2 by evidence suggesting that balance (rather than conflict) increased over the course of the decade as forward-thinking employers began to do things differently. It should be noted that there is more evidence suggesting that work-life conflict has increased over the decade than the reverse.

2.1 Why Balance Has Become More Difficult

The 1990s saw an increase in the number of working women, dual-earner and single-parent families, sandwich employees and employees who had responsibility for eldercare. During this decade employers downsized, rightsized and restructured, job insecurity increased for many and time in work rose. At the same time, technological change blurred the boundary between work and family. As noted below, each of these factors can be linked to increased work-life conflict.

Women in the Work Force and Changing Family Patterns

The story of work-life balance and stress cannot be told without mentioning the growing involvement of women in the paid labour force and the concomitant shift toward the dual-income family. At the beginning of the new millennium, the dual-income family has replaced the traditional male breadwinner/homemaker wife as the prototypical Canadian family type. Whereas less than one-third (32 percent) of Canadian families in 1967 had two income earners, by 1981 that figure had risen to above one in two (55 percent) and by 1998 close to two-thirds (64 percent) of Canadian families had two income earners (Sauvé, 1999). In other words, in today's economy the typical employed Canadian (both male and female) faces the challenge of combining parenting, care for a fragile elderly dependent and "bringing home the bacon" – circumstances that, in the absence of support from organizations and society, are associated with increased work-life conflict.

A second family configuration, the lone-parent household, also became more prevalent in the 1990s. The number of lone-parent families reached 1.1 million in 1996, up 19 percent from 1991 and 33 percent from 1986 (Statistics Canada, 1997*e*). Although these figures include both male- and female-headed households, lone parenthood is largely the domain of women. In 1996, lone-parent families headed by women outnumbered those headed by men by more than four to one (Statistics Canada, 1997*e*). Roughly half the female lone parents work for pay (Lero and Johnson, 1994). Lone parents in the labour force face considerable challenges in terms of balancing their work and home lives. Like parents in dual-income families, they must cope with the combined demands of their paid work and their domestic responsibilities. Unlike parents in two-partner families, they often must do

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so without the assistance and emotional support of a spouse, and often under the additional burden of financial stress.

Population Aging

Canada's population is aging, influenced largely by the baby boom of the 1950s and early 1960s and the baby bust of the late 1960s and early 1970s (Foot, 1996). A continuing low rate of fertility has resulted in an age distribution characterized by an overrepresentation of people in their prime working years, and a diminishing pool of young adults aged 15-24 (Statistics Canada, 1997*a*). The aging of the Canadian population has implications for organizations concerned with the issue of work-life balance and who have to recognize that this issue is not just going to "go away" as mid-career boomers complete their families and approach retirement age. Instead, work-life conflict may well become even more problematic as the "baby boom" and "baby bust" generations assume responsibility for both dependent children and aging parents. Employees with these dual demands have become known as the "sandwich generation" and typically experience extraordinary challenges balancing work and family demands (Vanier Institute, 1994).

Downsizing, Restructuring and Declines in Job Security

At the outset of the 1990s, the Canadian business climate was battered by a combination of factors (i.e., high interest rates, a high exchange rate for the Canadian dollar vis-à-vis the U.S. dollar, the slowdown in the U.S. economy, NAFTA) that produced a record high level of bankruptcies and high levels of unemployment (Stone and Meltz, 1993). Indeed, between 1991 and 1994, the Canadian unemployment rate remained above 10 percent, finally declining in the latter part of the decade and dropping to 7.6 by the end of 1999 (Statistics Canada, 2000*b*). The dominant management strategy employed during this period was one of cost cutting rather than people development and, as a nation, Canadians were fixated on jobs and the economy rather than achieving balance. These changes in the Canadian economy and the need to compete globally led many organizations to reduce staff and restructure employment in order to lower their operating costs. Other companies engaged in "boom" and "bust" cycles (i.e., periods of growth alternating with periods of considerable restructuring and downsizing) as products and competition changed (Lowe, 2000). For employees, this downsizing and restructuring meant that employees had to deal with the following issues (Lowe, 2000):

- a reshaping of the workforce (more women, more diversity, aging of the workforce),
- a recession in the early 1990s followed by a "jobless recovery,"
- a diminished social safety net and greater government cutbacks,
- high unemployment rates,
- declining living standards as after-tax incomes (taking inflation into account) declined,
- a greater need for both parents in a family to work to maintain a "decent" standard of living,
- a polarization of the Canadian labour force into those with good jobs, those with bad jobs and those with no jobs at all (and little hope of getting one).

Lowe and Schellenberg (1999) contend that this decline in secure, lifelong career employment led to decreased morale and increased job insecurity and stress during the last two decades of the past century. Job insecurity has relevance to the work-life conflict in that for many employees, work-life

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balance takes second place to securing permanent full-time employment. In addition, employees who are worried about finding and keeping a job (i.e., those in low paid and low skilled jobs, those without the education and skills to compete in the "new economy," those whose family situation makes it difficult to relocate, those whose families are highly dependent on their incomes) may be more likely to accept non-supportive, unhealthy and abusive working conditions. More recent work by Lowe and Schellenberg (2001) supports this conjecture by linking restructuring and downsizing to decreased trust and commitment.

Technological Change

Technological advances have fundamentally changed the nature of work. They have changed when and where we work, blurred the boundaries between work and non-work, increased the pace of work, and changed service delivery. Technological change is creating and destroying new jobs at an astonishing rate and can be linked to the issue of work-life balance in three ways: (1) it has led to a decrease in job security and/or an increase in unemployment/under-employment for those without the skills to compete in today's labour market (see above), (2) it has led to a blurring of the boundaries between work and life as it becomes increasingly easy to work any time and any where, and (3) the use of office technology such as e-mail and fax is associated with increased workloads and greater job stress (see below).

Changes in Time Spent in Work

At a time when technology was supposed to be reducing the work week and freeing up leisure time, a large segment of employees are actually working *longer* hours. Since the mid-1970s, the incidence of Canadian workers putting in 50 or more actual hours of work per week has gradually increased, rising from 11.3 percent of all workers in 1976 to 13.7 percent by 2000. While the incidence of long hours for men rose by about a quarter (15.7 to 19.6 percent) it almost doubled for women, jumping from 3.8 to 6.8 percent between 1976 and 2000.

Data on overtime work reflect a similar trend. In the first quarter of 1997, one-fifth of the Canadian workforce – roughly 2 million employees – reported overtime hours (Statistics Canada, 1997*f*). These employees spend, on average, 9 extra hours a week in overtime. Six out of 10 of these employees received no pay for these extra hours (Statistics Canada, 1997*f*). In other words, over the past decade, more Canadians have "donated" time to their employer. Since time is a finite resource, employees who devote more time to work have, by definition, fewer hours to spend in non-work roles and activities or sleep less. As such, they can be expected to have greater difficulties balancing work and family.

While approximately one in five employees spend more time than they want in work, other data indicate that many employees do not spend as much time as they would like. Both Lowe (2000) and Donner (*Atkinson Letter*, 1999) observed that work distribution became more polarized over the past decade with part-time workers working shorter hours and many full-time employees working longer hours. Donner notes that people at both ends of the continuum are equally likely to be unhappy. One group is having difficulty getting by because they are excluded from paid work or forced into marginal situations of underemployment. At the other end of the continuum are those with

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unsupportable workloads who are forced to work long hours. One end is suffering because they are too busy while at the other end they are suffering because they are unable to find enough paid work. Both underwork and overwork are destructive conditions.

Finally, it should be noted that employees have things to do with their time other than paid employment. After adding overtime, travel and work brought home, many Canadians are now devoting 45 hours or more per week to paid employment. When time in employment and time in family work are totaled, many families with both parents working are devoting 120 hours or more per week to work and family activities – the equivalent of three 40-hour weeks (Vanier Institute, 2000).

Corporate Inertia

While the rhetoric of management throughout the 1990s was one of "putting people first," "human capital" and "competitive advantage through people," management's practices throughout the past decade tended to move in the opposite direction. As Lowe (2000, p. 124) notes:

> Despite several generations of management and organization theories that emphasize the importance of human resources, the idea that workers are the key to achieving all business goals remains a very hard sell.

National survey data would indicate that while the number of employers who talk about work-life balance has increased, concrete changes in the area have been slow to materialize. Estimates indicate that flextime is available to only 1 in 4 Canadian workers (Akyeampong, 1997), compressed work weeks to less than 1 in 5 (Duxbury and Higgins 1998), and fewer than 1 in 10 employees have access to a telework option (Akyeampong, 1997). It appears that, from the employer's perspective, the highly visible (monetary) costs of implementing such programs have outweighed their less tangible (social and psychological) benefits.

The corporate response to global competition has been massive downsizings and restructurings, even in profitable firms. During the 1990s Canadian companies downsized, delayered, re-engineered, redeployed and reskilled employees. They also "compacted" work – doing more with less and demanding more from the fewer employees that "survived" these initiatives. Working longer and harder has become the norm for the "survivors." As Arthur Donner (quoted in the *Atkinson Letter*, October 1999) notes:

> Companies are making poor trade-offs. They are burning out their workers. The current distribution of working hours is dysfunctional for families and individuals.

Even in high growth areas (i.e., high technology) increased workloads, high work-life conflict and stress can be seen to be problematic (Duxbury, Dyke and Lam, 2000).

These experiences have left employees feeling devalued, distrustful, and cynical (Lowe, 2000). Recent data would suggest that Canadians are less willing than they used to be to trust either government or the private sector to take leadership with respect to issues such as work-life balance, stress and meaningful work. Rather they see these institutions as being part of the problem rather

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than part of the solution (Lowe, 2000). Organizational inertia, therefore, may have exacerbated work life balance issues for many workers who, for the most part, have been left on their own to cope with the new realities of the workplace.

2.2 Factors That May Have Lead to Increased Balance

It can also be argued that much of the above discussion on corporate inertia and job insecurity is no longer relevant to our discussion on work-life conflict due to labour market changes that occurred in the late 1990s and beyond. Proponents of this view contend that organizations have made significant progress with respect to work-life balance in recent years. They attribute increase in corporate awareness to two issues: the greater need to recruit and retain workers, and changing attitudes toward work. Such changes, they argue, have provided a power impetus for companies to turn to more flexible, family friendly workplaces as a means of retraining and energizing key employees and meeting strategic objectives.

Recruitment and Retention

An important factor contributing to the increased importance organizations are giving to the issue of work-life balance is the changing demographics of the Canadian labour force. As demographers predicted in the late 1980s (Johnston and Packer, 1987), the new millennium has brought with it a shortage of educated and skilled labour as baby boomers retire and the number of Canadians entering the labour force shrinks. The average age of employees in Canada is higher than at any time in recent history. In 2000, Canadian unemployment rates reached a 25-year low (Statistics Canada, 2000*b*) and available forecasts suggest that the shrinking of the labour force entry pool will continue well into the new century (Statistics Canada, 1997*a*). The problem is further compounded by the fact that the education and skills of many seeking employment are often inadequate for the new types of jobs that are vacant (i.e., specialized skill requirements).

The reduced supply of entry level workers will make finding, keeping and developing skilled employees a top priority in the years ahead. Recent research (i.e., Duxbury, Dyke and Lam, 2000; Conger, 1998) would suggest that many employees are attracted to an organization by its policies and practices supporting work-life balance. As such, employers are now more motivated than ever to explore options that give employees more flexibility and control, and are adopting programs that are designed to help employees balance work and life (i.e., flextime) under the assumption that they will improve recruitment and retention (Lowe, 2000).

Recruiting a good workforce is only part of the puzzle. Organizations also have to ensure that workers stay and flourish. Companies with high turnover pay a high price. It has been estimated, for example, that the costs of replacing professional employees can be up to five times the employees' annual salary (Vanderkolk and Young, 1991). These costs do not include indirect costs associated with accumulated human knowledge, lost future potential, and poor morale in areas with high turnover. Employee retention helps the company contain the costs associated with identifying, recruiting, retaining and moving talent. Indirect costs associated with client dissatisfaction are also higher in companies with high turnover (Gionfriddo and Dhingra, 1999). Provision of a supportive

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work environment, which emphasizes balance, has been shown to partially stem the flow of good employees out of an organization.

Changing Attitudes around Work

Arnold Deutsche, in his book entitled *The Human Resource Revolution: Communicate or Litigate* noted that today's "knowledge workers" hold work attitudes that differ in many ways from those of the "factory and production" workers that preceded them. Key differences include rising expectations for a more rewarding career, more humane working experiences and a greater "democratization" of the workplace. Today's employees are more likely to want a career not "just a job" and a meaningful life outside of work. Many have high expectations about gaining satisfaction from their work now and in the future, and want a say in decisions affecting their jobs and their employment.

Researchers are also seeing a different set of attitudes in individuals just entering the workplace (the so called "nexus" group or "echo boomers"). As Conger (1998, p. 21) notes:

> In a nutshell, they distrust hierarchy. They prefer more informal arrangements. They prefer to judge on merit rather than on status. They are far less loyal to their companies. They are the first generation to be raised on a heavy diet of workplace participation and teamwork. They know computers inside and out. They like money but they also say they want balance in their lives.

Research also indicates that this group wants choice, flexibility and increased control over both their jobs and the work-life interface (Conger, 1998).

Individuals who are now entering the workforce tend to be the children of parents who both held jobs. While these individuals benefited from the extra family income being in a dual-income family entailed, many felt that they were deprived of their parents' company, a situation aggravated by the fact that a very high percent were the children of divorce (Conger, 1998). Many in this new generation of workers say that they do not want the sort of lives their parents led. Rather, they want to spend more time with and be more available to their families (Conger, 1998).

This increased desire and quest for a "real balance between work and private life" has major implications for today's workplace, especially with respect to recruiting and retaining this cohort. This generation can be expected to insist that organizations find more flexible ways to integrate time for family and private lives into demanding careers (Conger, 1998). The business practices that motivated the homogeneous, male breadwinning workforce of the past, therefore, may simply not work for this group of employees. Conger (1998) also suggests that this yearning for life balance may increase conflict for this new generation of workers as their value for interesting work, which is often accompanied by longer hours and greater demands, conflicts with their desire for happy marriages, meaningful family time and weekends they can call their own.

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3.0 Employer and Employee Status Report: Changes in Key Outcomes Over the 1990s

How effectively have Canadian public, private and not-for-profit sector organizations responded to the issues raised in *Workforce 2000* and elsewhere (e.g., Towers Perrin and Hudson Institute, 1991, the popular press)? Have they re-examined antiquated human resources (HR) policies designed at a time when female workers were a relative minority and male workers could leave personal and family issues at home? Have they changed HR strategies and reward practices to accommodate the needs of today's employees? Answers to these questions can be inferred by looking at changes in employee experiences over time. The following section presents data that address the following questions:

- Is it easier today (i.e., 2001) for employees to blend work with personal and family responsibilities than it was in 1991?
- Have key physical and mental health outcomes changed over the decade?
- Have key employee attitudes toward their employer changed over the decade?

A description of how work-life balance was measured in this survey is given in Box 4. Data interpretation is discussed in Box 5.

Box 4
High Versus Low Work-Life Balance

Role overload, work interferes with family and family interferes with work were all operationalized using multi-item measures (see Box 1). To determine who scored high versus low on each of these constructs we followed the following steps:

- Calculated overall role overload, work to family interference and family to work interference scores (the summed average of the items making up the measure).
- Used population norms to divide the sample into three groups (high, moderate and low) on the basis of the respondent's overall role overload, work to family interference and family to work interference score (see Duxbury and Higgins, 1998, for a discussion of this procedure).

Box 5
Interpretation of the Data

All of the differences discussed in the paper meet two criteria: they are statistically significant and substantive (i.e., the differences matter in a practical sense). This second requirement was necessary as the large sample sizes meant that differences as small as 0.5 percent were often statistically significant. In interpreting the data the reader should use the following rule of thumb: the greater the difference, the more important the finding.

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Box 6
Comparison of 1991 and 2001 Samples

Variable		1991	2001
Number in sample		21,228	6,502
		(Percent)	
Female		56	56
Job type:			
managers		11	16
professionals		22	38
technical		15	16
clerical/administrative		34	20
Parents		64	69
With eldercare		6	25
Personal income:			
under $40,000		58	40
$40,000 to $60,000		28	38
$60,000+		14	22
Family income:			
under $40,000		15	8
$40,000 to $60,000		18	16
$60,000 to $99,999		42	45
100,000+		25	32
Age: 1991	Age: 2001		
under 30	under 35	22	27
30 to 39	36 to 45	38	37
40 to 49	46 to 55	28	30
50+	55+	21	7

3.1 Profile of the Survey Respondents

A comparison of the 1991 and 2001 samples (see Box 6) shows that, with a few exceptions the samples are quite similar. Approximately the same proportion of each sample are female, parents, managers and technical employees. The age data are also quite similar though not directly comparable as different categories were used in 1991 than in 2001.

A greater proportion of the 2001 sample had eldercare responsibilities (1 in 4 employees in the 2001 sample versus 6 percent in 1991). This finding is consistent with Statistics Canada (2000*a*) data showing that the proportion of the Canadian population over 65 has increased over the last decade (a trend that is predicted to continue). It also supports our contention that the percent of Canadian employees at risk for high work-life conflict has increased over time. When comparing the 1991 and 2001 samples, we also observe that the percent of respondents working in professional positions has increased over the decade while the proportion of the sample working in clerical/administrative positions has declined. This change is consistent with the ascendancy of the knowledge sector and

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knowledge worker and changes in the gender composition of the Canadian workforce reported by Statistics Canada (2000*a*) (i.e., more female professionals in 1999 than in 1987).

3.2 Work-Life Conflict Has Increased Over the Decade

The data shown in Figure 1 show that, despite all the talk about work-life balance, all the new programs and policies touted in the popular press and organizational media releases, all the empirical evidence linking work-life conflict to the bottom line (i.e., Duxbury et al., 1999) and all the talk about the "new HR" and responding to the needs of the new workforce, the employees who filled out our survey in 2001 have significantly more role overload, interference from work to family (WTF) and interference from family to work (FTW) than their counterparts in 1991 (i.e., less work-life balance). Role overload has gone up the most, increasing from 47 percent with high role overload in 1991 to 59 percent with high role overload in the year 2001. Other data in the 2001 survey would suggest that much of this increase in role overload can be linked to new information and communication technologies (i.e., laptops, e-mail, cell phones) and organizational norms that still reward long hours at the office rather than performance.

While employees in 2001 are still more likely to meet work demands at the expense of time with family (in both samples interference from work to family is substantially higher than interference from family to work), the extent to which employees' family responsibilities interfere with their ability to work is on the rise (5 percent high in 1991 versus 10 percent high in 2001). High interference from work to family increased by 3 percentage points in the same time period. The number of respondents with medium interference from family to work also rose in the past decade. In 1991, 27 percent of our respondents reported moderate levels of family to work interference. This increased to 31 percent in 2001. During this same time period, the amount of time employees with dependent care spent in family activities (i.e., childcare, home chores) decreased from approximately

Figure 1
Comparison of Work-Family Outcomes:
1991 versus 2001

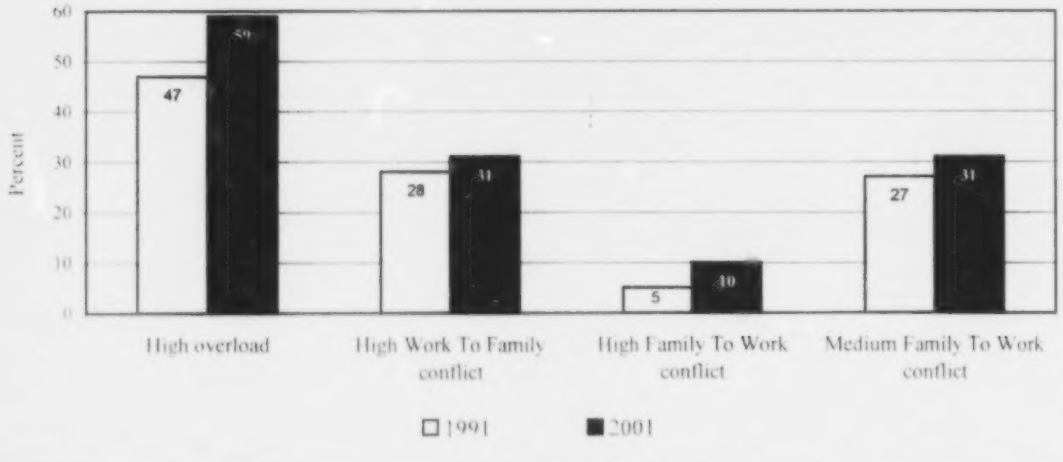

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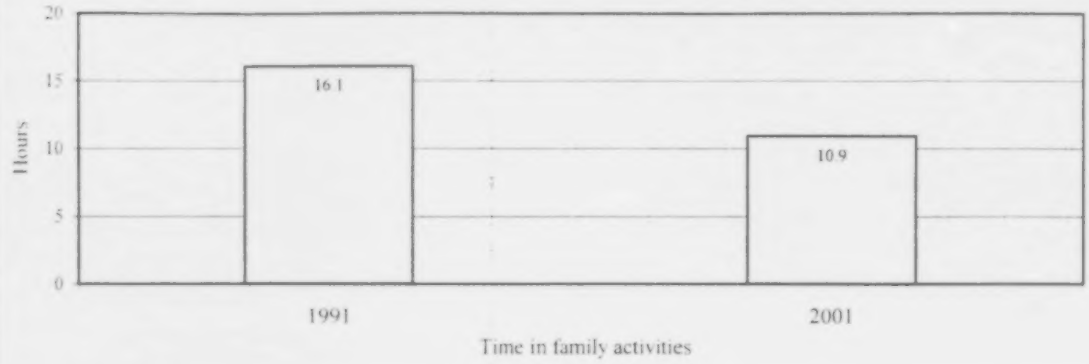
Figure 2
Comparison of Time (Hours Per Week) in Family Activities for Those with Dependent Care Responsibilities: 1991 versus 2001



16 hours per week to just under 11 hours per week (see Figure 2), suggesting that the observed increase in role overload can be attributed to increased demands at work rather than increased time in family role activities.

3.3 Employees' Mental Health Has Declined Over the Decade

Work-life conflict affects individuals in three ways:

- behavioral consequences (i.e., changes in eating, smoking, drinking);
- psychological consequences (i.e., increased stress and depression, lower life satisfaction); and
- physical health consequences that can be linked to higher levels of stress (i.e., cardiovascular disease and gastrointestinal disorders).

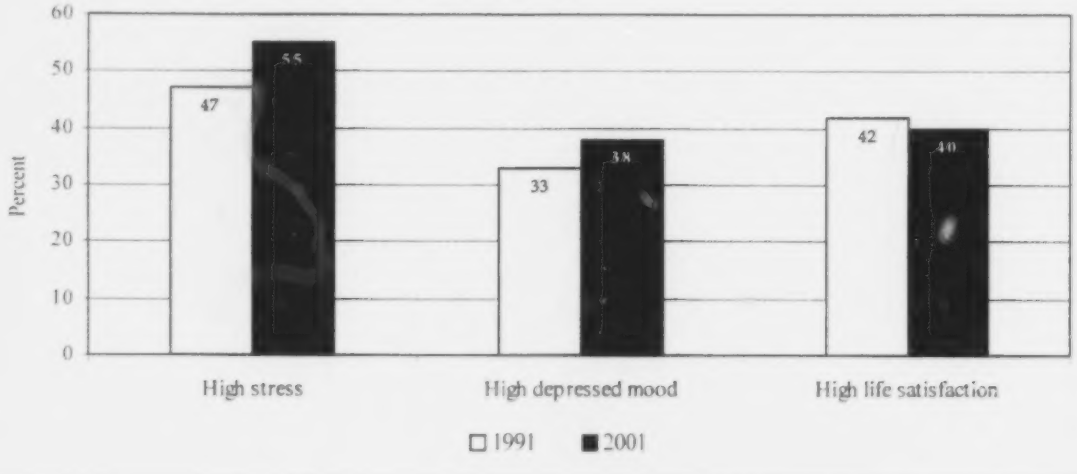
Our data allow us to examine how Canadian employees' psychological health (perceived stress, depressed mood, life satisfaction) in 2001 compares to that reported in 1991 (see Figure 3). We also examined changes in physical health over time (see discussion in Box 7).

Perceived stress refers to the extent to which one perceives one's situation to be uncontrollable and burdensome. Individuals who report high levels of perceived stress often manifest symptoms frequently associated with "*dis*tress," including nervousness, frustration, irritability, and generalized anxiety. Perceived stress has been linked to job dissatisfaction, depressed feelings, work absence, and turnover. Perceptions of stress have been shown to be particularly high among employees who have difficulty balancing work and non-work demands.[4]

Depressed mood is a state characterized by low energy and persistent feelings of helplessness and hopelessness (Duxbury and Higgins, 1998). In 1995, over 1.5 million Canadians sought treatment for depression (Statistics Canada, 1999). Depression represents the single most common psychological condition seen by the family physician (Quick et al., 1997). Given the persistent, and

often irreconcilable, time demands of the work and family roles, it is not surprising that work-life conflict has been shown to be a significant contributor to depressed mood.[5]

Figure 3
Change in Key Mental Health Outcomes Over Time:
1991 versus 2001



Box 7
Changes in Physical Health Over Time

In both the 1990 and 2000 surveys we assessed respondents' physical health using the following question from the Health and Daily Living Form (HDL; Moos, Cronkite, Billings and Finney, 1988): "Not counting regular and maternity-related check-ups, how many times during the last 6 months have you seen a physician?" From this question we calculated the who had visited a physician, the number of physical visits for the total sample and the number of physician visits for those who had sought care.

The data would suggest that the higher levels of perceived stress and depressed mood reported by employees in 2001 are indeed taking a toll on physical health. Over the past decade, all employees, regardless of gender, job type or parental status appear to be in poorer health. In 1991, respondents made an average of 2.6 physician visits for ill health in a six-month period. Those in the 2001 survey made 3.0 visits in the same time period.

In both 1991 and 2001, women (regardless of job type, time in dependent care, parental status) made more physician visits than men. This finding is consistent with most work in this area. When gender is taken into account:

- non-professionals make more physician visits than professionals,
- employees who spend more time in dependent care make more physician visits than those who spend less time, and
- employees with children living at home make more physician visits than employees who have no children at home (i.e., non-parents, those with older children).

Additional data collected on the physical health of Canadian employees collected in the 2001 survey (see Box 14) reinforce our impression that their physical health has declined over the decade.

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Life satisfaction provides an assessment of an individual's overall sense of well-being (physical, emotional, social productive). Work-life researchers reason that, because of the interactive and reciprocal nature of the relationships between work and family domains, work-related role stress might combine with work-family demands to exert considerable influence on an employee's overall perception of life satisfaction. Further, it is assumed that improvements in the quality of work-life will produce corresponding improvements in the quality of life as it makes it easier for employees to reduce the strains of managing the modern family. Generally, the research has supported these contentions. High work-life conflict has consistently been associated with lower levels of life satisfaction.[6]

Overall, the 1990s appear to have been a tough decade for Canadians working for medium and large organizations. Comparison of the 1991 and 2001 samples indicates that the incidence of high levels of perceived stress and depression has increased in the Canadian labour force in the past decade. In 1991, 47 percent of the respondents to our survey reported high levels of perceived stress; this had increased to 55 percent, with high levels of perceived stress, in 2001. In 1991, 33 percent of the respondents to our survey reported high levels of depressed mood compared to 38 percent in the 2001 sample. Given these findings and the link between mental health and life satisfaction, it is not surprising to find that life satisfaction of our respondents (and by extension that of Canadians employed by medium and large organizations) declined over the decade. In 1991, 42 percent expressed a high degree of life satisfaction versus 40 percent in 2001. This decline in life satisfaction is consistent with the rise in perceived stress and depressed mood.

3.4 Employees' Attitudes toward Work Have Deteriorated Over the Decade

Unfortunately for organizations, our data suggest that it is not just the individuals themselves who pay a price when employees are mismanaged. Signs of problems at the organizational level range from increased absence and turnover due to physical and mental illness, and the inability to manage work-related stress to reduced job satisfaction and commitment (Duxbury, Higgins, Lee and Mills, 1991; Higgins et al., 1992). Some of these consequences are quantifiable in dollars and cents (e.g., time lost due to illness, turnover); others are somewhat less tangible and reflect a deterioration in employee attitudes toward their work and the employing organization (e.g., reduced job satisfaction and employee commitment).[7]

To what extent have the problems identified in the preceding sections (i.e., higher stress and depressed mood, poorer physical health, increased work-life conflict) and the literature review (i.e., increased expectations around work) spilt over into the work environment. Our data allow us to partially answer this question by examining changes in key organizational outcomes such as time in work, absenteeism (see Box 8), job stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Time at work: When asked to identify their biggest concern in life, working parents typically respond "time" (Duxbury and Higgins, 1998). Time at work is the single largest chunk of time that most people owe to others outside their family. Consequently, it is often the cornerstone around which other daily activities must be made to fit. As a fixed commodity, time allocated to employment is necessarily unavailable for other activities, including time with family or in leisure.

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Box 8
Changes in Absenteeism Due to Ill Health Over the Past Decade

In 1997, full-time employees in Canada missed an average of 7.4 days from work, representing an estimated loss of 66 million workdays (Akyeampong, 1998). A rudimentary calculation based on average daily earnings of $135 suggests that absenteeism may cost Canadian organizations as much as $8.9 billion annually. It is difficult to estimate what proportion of this lost work time is attributable to work-life stress per se. Our own work and work by Statistics Canada does, however, give us some idea. Statistics Canada determined that in 1997, 1.2 of the 7.4 days lost per employee was due to personal/family responsibilities (Akyeampong, 1998). Applying the average earnings calculation used earlier, a conservative estimate of the cost to Canadian organizations of time lost for personal/family reasons is roughly $1.4 billion per year. A recent study by Duxbury and Higgins (1998) determined that employees with high work-life conflict had absenteeism rates that were three times higher than those in the low work-life conflict group (9.5 days versus 2.5). Such absenteeism was calculated to cost the Canadian economy just over $3.5 billion per annum. These data provide strong evidence of a link between work-life conflict and absence.

In the 1991 study, total absenteeism was assessed using the following measure from the Health and Daily Living Form (HDL; Moos, Cronkite, Billings and Finney, 1988): "During the last 6 months, have you been unable to work or carry out your usual activities because of health problems? (No; Yes, How many days?)." In the 2001 study, this question was expanded to include days absent due to personal/family problems and emotional and physical fatigue.

So, what do the data tell us with respect to absenteeism due to ill health? Not surprisingly, given the data on physician visits presented earlier, the data indicates that absenteeism due to ill health has increased over the past decade. In 1991, employees reported that they missed 3.1 days of work in a six-month period due to ill health. This increased to 3.5 days in 2001 (i.e., 6.2 days absence due to ill health a year versus 7.0). In both 1991 and 2001:

- women, regardless of job type, parental status or life-cycle stage, were more likely to miss work due to ill health than men,
- women with children under 18 and still living at home missed more days of work due to ill health that women with no children or women with older children; having children at home was not associated with absenteeism due to ill health for men,
- absenteeism due to ill health is positively correlated with time in dependent care, and
- when gender is taken into account, non-professionals reported higher absenteeism due to ill health than professionals.

Unfortunately, we were not able to examine if absenteeism due to emotional/mental fatigue and family matters had increased over the past decade. Data from the 2001 study do, however, suggest that if these types of absenteeism had been included in our analysis, the increase in levels of absence from work would have been more dramatic (see Box 13).

Thus time spent at work offers an important and concrete measure of one dimension of employment that affects individuals and their families.

Time at work is also an important factor with respect to an employee's ability to balance home and work demands. For example, total hours spent at work each week is the most reliable predictor of role overload, family strain, and work-life conflict. Furthermore, time spent in overtime work has been found to have a high positive association with work conflict and work-family stress.

Job stress is viewed in terms of the incompatibility of work demands. Working conditions that give rise to high job stress include heavy workloads, high levels of role ambiguity, under utilization of abilities, lack of participation in decision making, health and safety hazards, job insecurity, tight deadlines and responsibility for the safety and well-being of others. High work stress is linked to poor physical and mental health, high family stress, marital conflict, poor performance of work and family roles, low work morale, organizational commitment and job satisfaction.[8]

Job satisfaction is the degree to which an individual feels positively or negatively about various aspects of the job. It represents the personal meaning or perceived quality of one's job and associated

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work experiences. Research has shown a negative relationship between job satisfaction and work stress, work-family conflict, absenteeism and intent to quit. A positive relationship has been observed between job satisfaction and organizational commitment, marital satisfaction, life satisfaction, and mental and physical health. A link between high work-life conflict and reduced job satisfaction has been reported in the literature.[9] A number of authors feel that this occurs because the inconveniences and irritations caused by work-family interference (i.e., not being able to segregate or integrate the work and family systems) or role overload (i.e., excessive work and family demands) produce conflicts that spill over into the work domain. Such conflicts make a person too tired, too preoccupied or too stressed to enjoy his/her job.

Organizational commitment measures an employee's loyalty to the organization. An individual who has high organizational commitment is willing to exert extra effort on behalf of the organization, and has a strong desire to remain with the organization (Mowday, Porter and Steers, 1979). Work-life conflict has been shown to be associated with lower organizational commitment.[10] Individuals who view their employers as being unsupportive of their non-work roles are less likely to feel a sense of loyalty to the perceived source of the conflict. Commitment is particularly critical to organizations as it is linked to productivity (those with high commitment tend to work longer hours, work more paid and unpaid overtime) and retention (employees who are more committed to their employer are less likely to leave the organization).

More Time at Work

The average employee in the 2001 sample devoted approximately 45 hours per week to paid employment – a substantial increase from the 42 hours on average spent by respondents to the 1991 survey. Much of this increase in time spent in work can be attributed to the fact that those in 2001 were more likely to take work home to complete outside of regular hours or on their days off (52 percent in the 2001 sample versus 31 percent in 1991) (Figure 4). Employees who took work home to complete spent on average 4.0 hours per week performing supplemental work at home (SWAH) (versus 3.6 hours in 1991). These data are consistent with the data on role overload and WTF interference presented earlier and support the idea that work demands have increased over the decade.

More Job Stress – Less Job Satisfaction and Commitment

The data reviewed in this report paint a disturbing picture for employers. High job stress has become more problematic over the past decade with twice as many respondents reporting high job stress in 2001 than in 1991 (just over one in four employees (27 percent) in the 2001 sample experiencing high job stress versus 13 percent in the 1991 survey) (see Figure 5). During the same time period job satisfaction and organizational commitment have also appeared to decline. Whereas almost two-thirds of employees in 1991 were highly satisfied with their jobs (62 percent) and committed to their organization (66 percent), fewer than half reported high satisfaction (45 percent) or high organizational commitment (50 percent) in 2001. Such findings are cause for alarm given the data on recruitment and retention of knowledge workers presented earlier. They are not, however, surprising given the increased incidence of perceived stress, depressed mood and work-life conflict noted earlier. Taken as a whole, these findings suggest that many of the management practices

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Figure 4
Time at Work: 1991 versus 2001

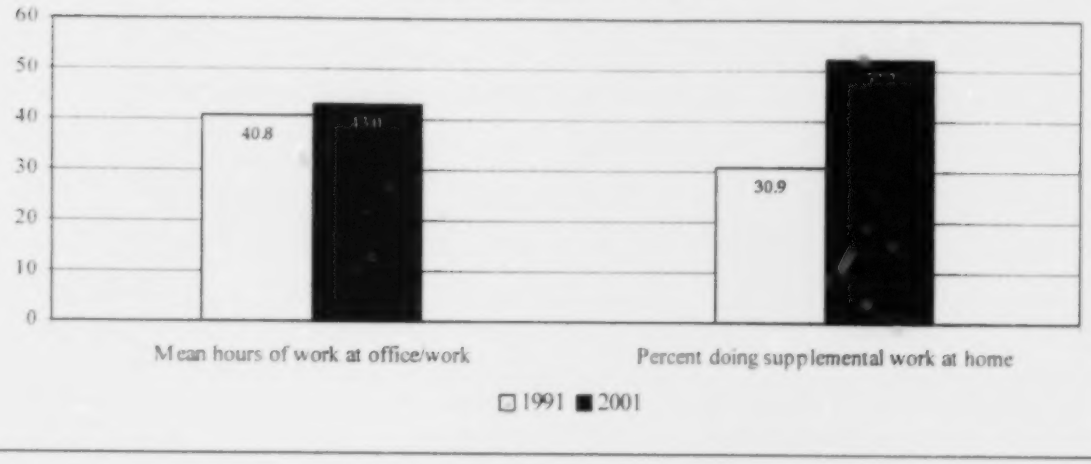
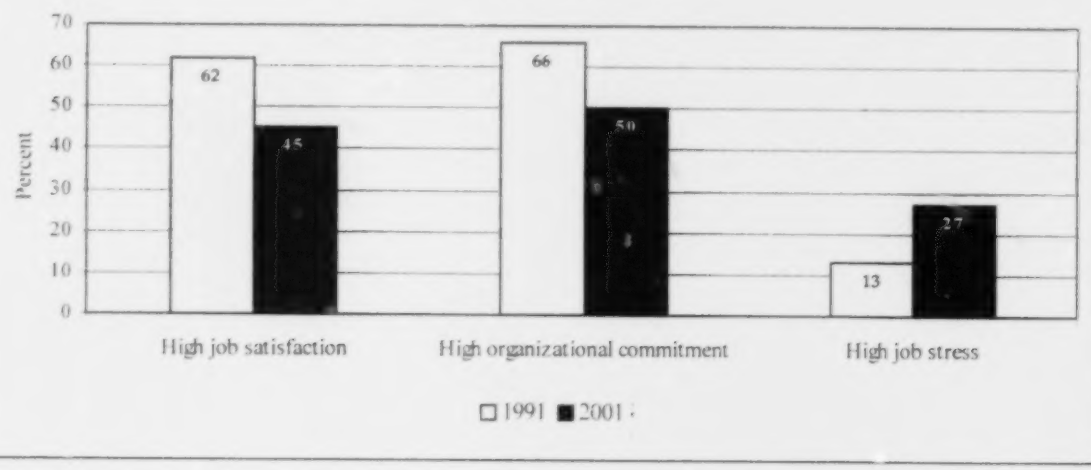


Figure 5
Employee Attitudes and Outcomes:
1991 versus 2001



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instituted by Canadian organizations over the past decade (i.e., downsizing, re-engineering, focus on hours not output, pay freezes, restructuring) have had a negative impact on how Canadian employees perceive their job and their employer.

4.0 Do All Employees Experience Work-Life Conflict the Same Way?

To fully appreciate how employees' ability to balance work and non-work demands have changed over the past decade it is necessary to recognize the fact that factors such as gender, job type, parental status and time in dependent care may have a strong impact on their experiences.[11] Consequently, we extended our analysis by considering the impact of the following demographic variables: (1) gender, (2) job type,[12] (3) parental status, and (4) time spent in dependent care. While this list is by no means exhaustive, it does focus on those factors which previous research has shown influence both the nature of individuals' participation in work and family roles and/or shape the meaning individuals give to family and work, and the identities they develop. For policymakers and employers, this section identifies those individuals who may be at greatest risk for conflict and stress-related health disorders and facilitates the development of solutions that are specific to the various groups.

4.1 Do Men and Women Experience Work-Life Conflict in the Same Way?

There is a large body of literature to attest to the fact that women experience higher levels of work-life conflict than do men. Why this is so is still the topic of some debate. Some suggest that women may be biologically "programmed" (through sex-based hormonal systems, for example) to respond differently to stressors.[13] This hypothesis is borne out by differences in symptomatology shown by women versus men (i.e., whereas women tend to respond to stress by exhibiting emotional symptoms, such as depression, mental illness, and general psychological discomfort, men tend to respond by manifesting physiological disease, such as heart disease and cirrhosis).

Others argue that gender differences in stress response are attributable to differences in socialization and role expectations that expose women to a higher level of stressors. In the home, women, irrespective of their involvement in paid work, are significantly more likely than men to bear primary responsibility for home chores and childcare (Statistics Canada, 2000*a*). In the workplace, women are disproportionately represented in occupations with "built-in strain" such as clerical work, which couples high work demands with little discretionary control (Statistics Canada, 2000*a*). Although it is difficult to determine which of these mechanisms is most responsible for women's differential response to stress, there is little doubt that women are exposed to different (if not more) stressors than men at both work and at home.

We believe it is useful to examine gender differences within job type and parental status. Such an analysis recognizes that Canadian men and women have different realities and that it may be these realities, rather than gender itself, that impact the attitudes and outcomes being examined in this analysis. This type of analysis should be invaluable to policymakers who need to know if the supports and interventions should be targeted to a particular group (i.e., women) or an environmental condition (i.e., low control jobs).

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Why Look at Job Type Differences in Work-Life Conflict?

We contend that the type of job an individual holds may moderate the attitudes and outcomes being examined in this analysis. We base this contention on research that suggests that managers and professionals are more likely to occupy occupations that afford more flexibility and personal control over the timing of work.[14] This increased flexibility and control facilitates the commitments of parenting and other non-work activities for those in professional jobs. Researchers also note that professionals may have an advantage in balancing work and home life as their jobs offer greater extrinsic rewards (e.g., salary) that can offset some of the "costs" that demanding jobs entail (i.e., allow those with higher incomes to purchase goods and services to help them cope). Non-professional employees, on the other hand, are more likely to work in high demand, low control jobs. Seminal work by Karasek (1979) indicates that employees in these types of positions typically report higher levels of stress and poorer physical and mental health.

Job type also may act as a surrogate measure for other important variables such as education, income, commitment, and identification with the work role, which are, in turn, linked to work-life conflict and stress. Managers and professionals have been reported to be more highly educated, to receive greater remuneration, to spend more time and energy in the work role, to have greater job mobility and to be more highly committed to and involved in their work than their counterparts in non-professional positions. Each of these factors has been linked to an increased ability to cope with work-life conflict and stress, and more positive work outcomes (i.e., higher commitment, higher job satisfaction). As can be seen in Figures 6a and 6b, the managers and professionals in our sample are in very different socio-economic circumstances from the non-professionals (i.e., higher education, more formal education). These differences are consistent with those reported in the literature and support our decision to divide the sample into two job types.

Why Look at Gender and Job Type Together?

The most recent data available (Statistics Canada, 2000*a*) show that Canadian women are compressed into many of the lower paying positions within organizations. For example, in 1999, 70 percent of all employed women (versus 29 percent of employed men) worked in occupations in which women have traditionally been concentrated: teaching and nursing. One in four women worked in clerical or administrative positions (Statistics Canada, 2000*a*). To determine whether job type, gender, or both, influence the attitudes and outcomes being examined in this report, we use four-way comparisons (i.e., men and women in professional positions are compared to men and women in non-professional positions).[15] Three gender by job type comparisons are examined in this section of the report. Work-life outcomes are shown in Figure 7, organizational attitudes and outcomes in Figure 8 and mental health outcomes in Figure 9. The following conclusions can be drawn from these data.

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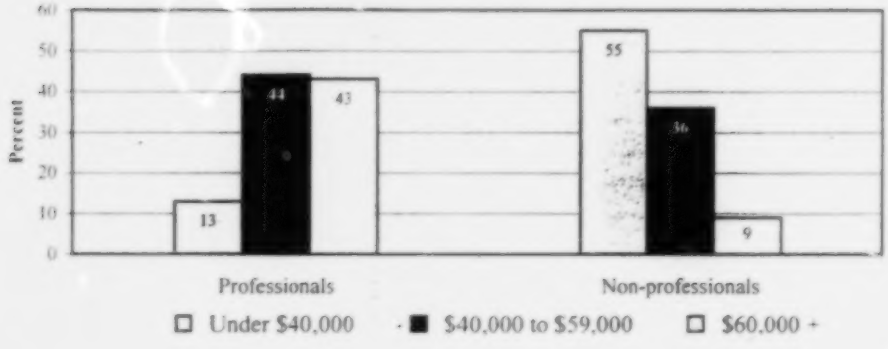
Figure 6
Impact of Job Type on Socio-economic Status

A. Job Type by Income, 2001



B. Job Type by Education, 2001

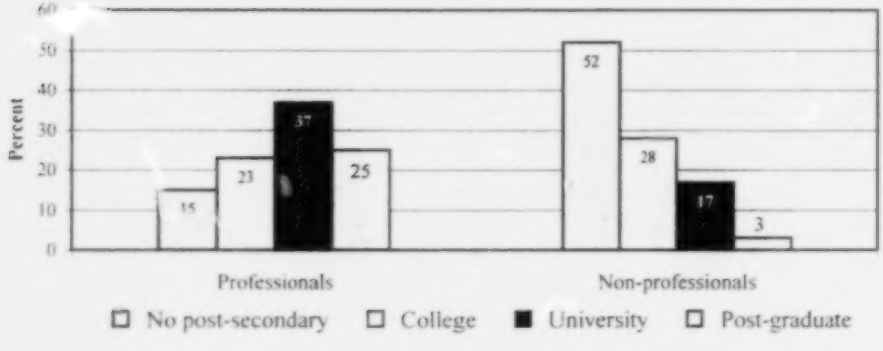
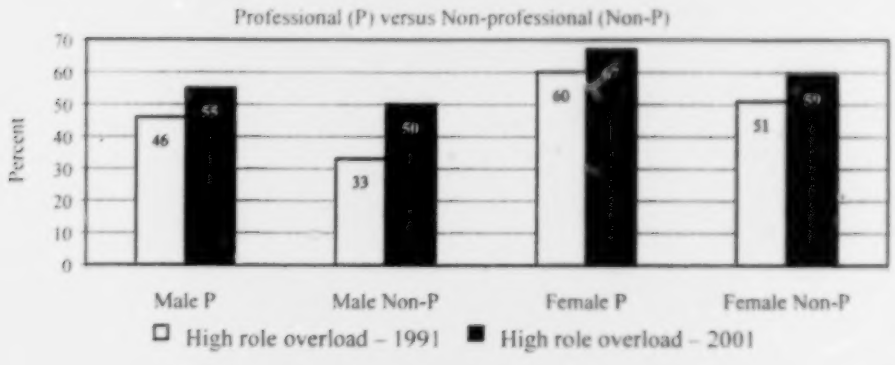
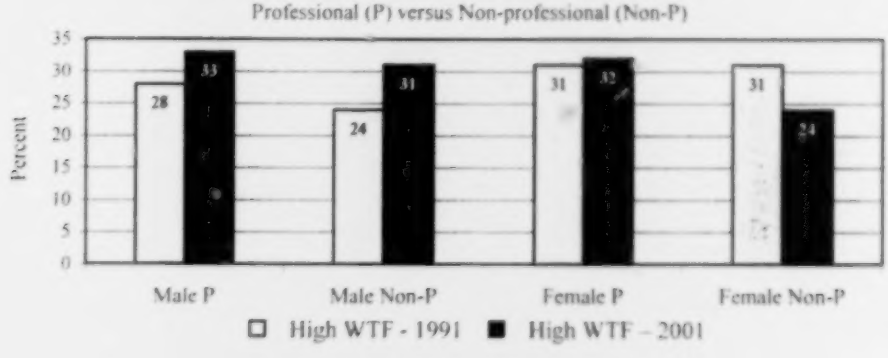


Figure 7
Impact of Gender and Job Type on Work-Life Balance: 1991 vs. 2001

A. Role Overload by Gender and Job Type



B. Work To Family (WTF) Conflict by Gender and Job Type



C. Family To Work (FTW) Conflict by Gender and Job Type

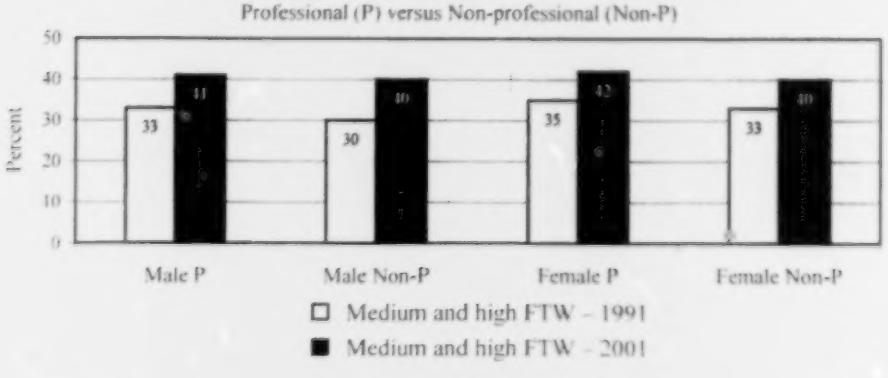


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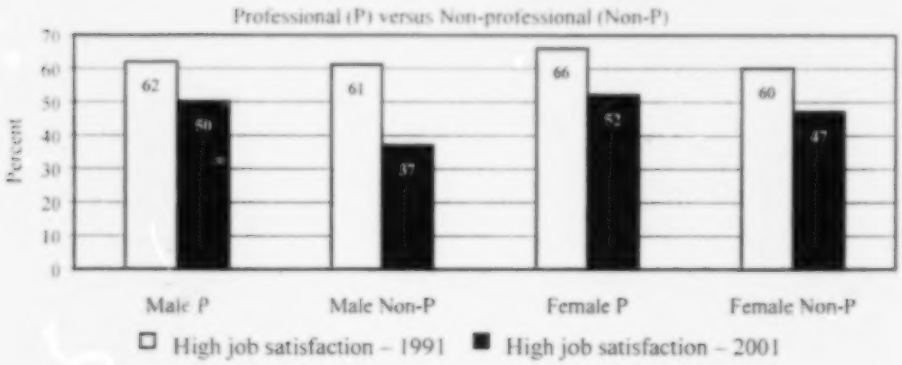
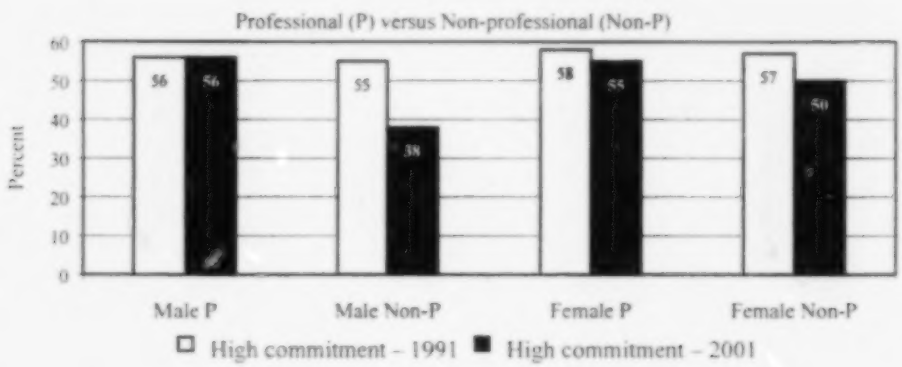
Figure 8
Impact of Gender and Job Type on Organizational Outcomes: 1991 vs. 2001

A. Job Satisfaction by Gender and Job Type



B. Commitment by Gender and Job Type



C. Job Stress by Gender and Job Type

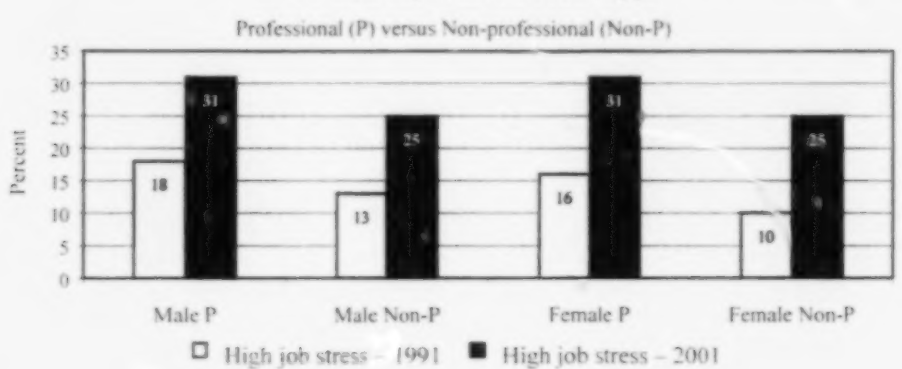


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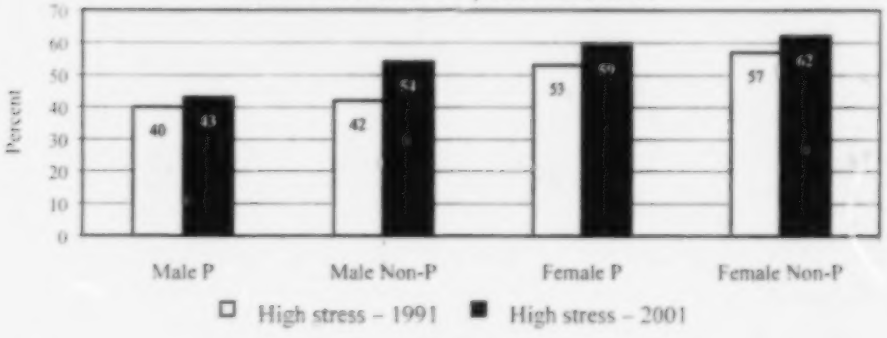
Figure 9
Impact of Gender and Job Type on Mental Health: 1991 vs. 2001

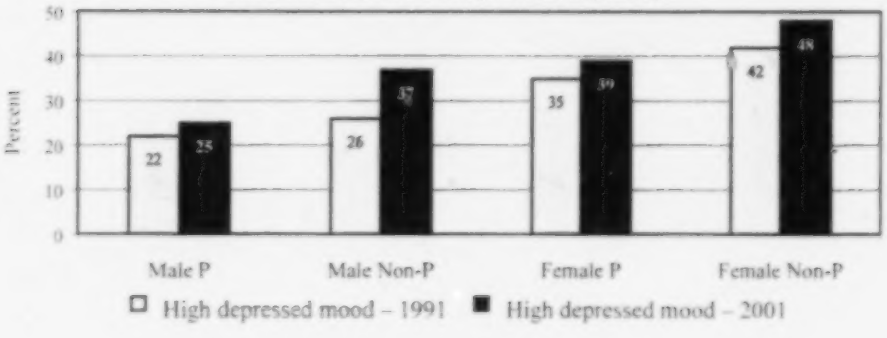
A. Perceived Stress by Gender and Job Type

Professional (P) versus Non-professional (Non-P)



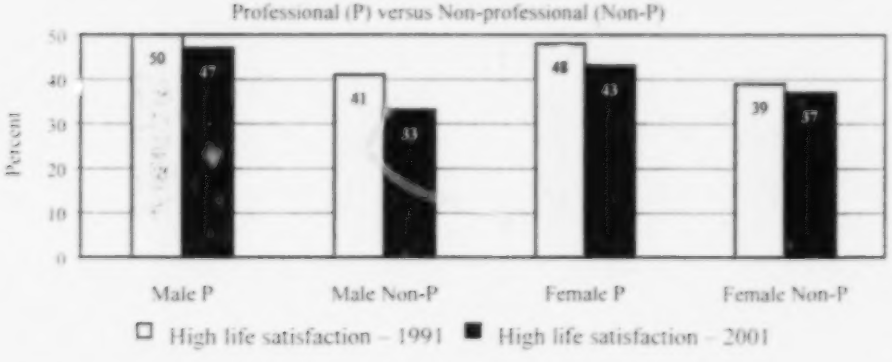
B. Depressed Mood by Gender and Job Type

Professional (P) versus Non-professional (Non-P)



C. Life Satisfaction by Gender and Job Type

Professional (P) versus Non-professional (Non-P)



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Work-Life Balance Is Associated with Gender

The data indicate that the relationship between work-life balance and gender is quite complex and depends on the dimension of work-life balance one is looking at.

- In both 1991 and 2001 samples, professionals (regardless of their gender) were more likely than non-professionals to report high role overload.
- In both 1991 and 2001 samples, women (regardless of their job type) were more likely than men to report high role overload.
- In both 1991 and 2001 samples, men (regardless of their job type) were more susceptible to high work to family interference than women.
- Within job type, the proportion of men in our samples who report high work to family interference has increased over time. One in four of the non-professional men in our 1991 sample reported high work to family. This had increased to one in three in the 2001 sample. Similarly, the proportion of professionals experiencing high work to family interference went from 28 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 2001.
- The proportion of women in our samples with high work to family interference did not generally increase between 1991 and 2001, regardless of job type.

In other words, the proportion of the sample reporting high work to family interference has increased over time for men but not women. It would appear from these data that male gender role expectations (i.e., work comes first) have not changed all that much over the past decade despite the increased number of women in the workforce and the emergence of new family forms. Rather, the increase in work to family interference for men indicates that it is now more difficult for men with spouses who work outside the home or to give priority to work rather than family.

Work Outcomes Depend on Job Rather than Gender

Examination of the data in Figures 8 and 9 reveals that when it comes to predicting work attitudes and outcomes, the type of job one holds is more important that the gender of the employee. Between 1991 and 2001 the percent of employees in our sample with high job stress increased while the percent with high job satisfaction and high organizational commitment declined. In all three cases, however, the extent of the change varied depending on the type of job the employee held. In both the 1991 and 2001 samples, professional employees reported higher job stress than non-professionals. While job satisfaction and organizational commitment declined for men and women, professionals and non-professionals alike, the decrease has been the most pronounced for those in non-professional positions. It is particularly relevant to note that in the 1991 study, neither job satisfaction nor organizational commitment were strongly associated with job type. In 2001, however, employees in non-professional positions were significantly less satisfied with their jobs and committed to their organizations than their counterparts in professional positions. The decline in commitment and job satisfaction was particularly precipitous for male non-professionals. These data would suggest that the organizational changes discussed in Section 2 of this report (i.e., downsizing, restructuring, technological change) and/or the higher levels of work-life conflict discussed in section 3.2 have had a greater impact on the work attitudes of non-professional employees (regardless of their gender) than on professional employees. These findings would support the idea that the work environment

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and working conditions enjoyed by professionals is more likely to engender high commitment and job satisfaction than that experienced by non-professionals.

Mental Health Also Depends on Job

Over the last decade the percent of workers in our sample reporting high stress and depression has increased substantially, while fewer reported satisfaction with life. In both the 1991 and 2001 samples, when comparisons were done within gender (i.e., men compared to men, women compared to women) professionals were found to be in better mental health (i.e., lower stress and depression, higher life satisfaction) than non-professionals. This occurred despite the fact that in both time periods the professionals in our sample were more likely than the non-professionals to work long hours, take work home with them and report high role overload and job stress – conditions that are generally a recipe for poorer mental health.

It would appear that professional employees are more able than their non-professional counterparts to cope with these higher work demands. These findings are consistent with the literature presented earlier suggesting that those in professional positions have a greater perception of control than non-professionals, and that it is these higher levels of control that help them cope with heavier work demands. Unfortunately we still do not know what contributes to this increased sense of control but some factors may include better working conditions, more interesting work, higher levels of flexibility, higher job security and mobility (linked to their higher levels of education), higher incomes, etc. These data also suggest that the mental health declines we observed in the non-professional groups may be more a function of their work environment, the types of jobs they do and working conditions rather than the time spent at work itself. This interpretation of the data is consistent with the findings with respect to commitment and job satisfaction reported earlier.

Profile of Professional Women

Within the Canadian workplaces examined, the women in professional positions experienced great difficulty with respect to balancing work and family demands: difficulties that have not diminished over time despite the rhetoric and the policies. Professional women experienced the highest levels of role overload and Work To Family (WTF) conflict in both 1991 and 2001 samples (two-thirds of the women in this group reported high role overload in 2001 and one in three reported high WTF). While they are in better mental health than women in non-professional positions, they report higher levels of stress and depression and lower levels of life satisfaction than male professionals (their life satisfaction is, however, higher than non-professionals of both genders). These data would suggest that while professional jobs offer some benefits, these benefits are either not as available to women professionals or, alternatively, not as relevant to their lives as they are to men in these positions.

How else have the circumstances of the professional women in our sample changed over the decade? Their organizational commitment has dropped and their levels of job stress have increased (15 percent over the decade) to the point where they share with their male colleagues in professional positions the distinction of having the highest levels of job stress. Job satisfaction, in contrast, has remained relatively constant over the decade. These findings are virtually identical to those reported by the male professionals in our sample and suggest that many of the organizational changes of the

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1990s have increased job stress for those in professional positions as well as slightly reducing loyalty and commitment to the organization. In other words, while many professional women continue to enjoy what they do at work, they have become less positive about where they do it. These findings are important to employers who are concerned with recruiting and retaining female managers and professionals.

Profile of Professional Men

The male professionals in our sample have been less affected than their female counterparts by the workplace transformations of the 1990s and appear to have made it through the decade relatively unscathed. In both 1991 and 2001 they were in better mental health (lowest levels of stress and depressed mood, highest levels of life satisfaction in both time periods) than those in the other three groups. Furthermore, while stress and depressed mood did increase over the decade for male professionals, the increases were relatively small compared to those reported by non-professional men and women of both job types.

With one exception (commitment), changes in work outcomes for this group were identical to those reported for female professionals (i.e., job satisfaction declined and high job stress increased by 13 percent over the decade). The percent with high organizational commitment (56 percent), however, remained constant over the decade (it declined in all other groups). Future research is needed to determine why commitment of professionals remained relatively high throughout the decade while that of non-professionals declined. Competing explanations include greater participation in change process, more information about the change, selective exiting of professionals who were not committed, higher levels of control over work environment, more career development, greater job security and/or better buy-out packages.

Despite these trends, it should be noted that balance became more problematic for the male professionals in our sample with a substantially greater percent experiencing high role overload, high work to family interference and medium/high family to work interference in 2001 than in 1991.

Profile of Non-professional Women

The findings with respect to non-professional women are mixed. On a positive note, respondents in this group were less likely to report high work to family interference at the end of the decade than in 1991. This suggests that work-life policies may be more effective for women in certain job categories (i.e., more acceptable to use them, more available to women in certain types of jobs, unions having positive impact on these sorts of jobs). Additional research is needed to determine why work to family interference has declined for non-professional women but increased for non-professional men. Statistic Canada (2000*a*) notes that men and women tend to hold different types of jobs. It may be that the jobs held by men in non-professional positions interfere more with family roles than the jobs held by their female counterparts. Finally, it may be that the organizational culture is more accepting of non-professional women who restrict their hours at work, refuse to take work home, stay overtime, etc., than it is for men or professional women who display these behaviours.

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It is also interesting to note that while the percent of non-professional women with high life satisfaction declined over the decade, the drop was not as pronounced as that reported by men in non-professional positions. This would suggest that the decline has more to do with the types of jobs non-professional males hold rather than being in a non-professional position per se (remember, the types of non-professional jobs done tend to be segregated by gender).

On a less positive note, in both 1991 and 2001, non-professional women reported the highest levels of perceived stress and depressed mood. Also cause for concern are the findings that show that when the 2001 sample is compared to the 1991 sample, the percent of non-professional women with:

- high role overload increased by 8 percentage points,
- high organizational commitment dropped by 7 percentage points,
- high job satisfaction dropped by 13 percentage points,
- high job stress increased by 15 percentage points.

These data indicate that the non-professional women in our sample experienced a decline in the quality of their jobs and their work environments (i.e., jobs less satisfying, more stressful, overload higher) over the decade. This decline may, in turn, have contributed to the poorer mental health and lower organizational commitment reported by women in this group.

Profile of Non-professional Men

The decade was hardest on the men in non-professional positions in our sample. This group experienced:

- the largest increase in high role overload (17 percentage point increase),
- the largest increase in work interferes with family (7 percentage point increase),
- the largest increase in high perceived stress (12 percentage point increase) and depression (11 percentage point increase),
- the greatest declines in job satisfaction (24 percentage point decline), organizational commitment (17 percentage point decline), and life satisfaction (8 percentage point decline),[16]
- a 12 point increase in high job stress.

What is particularly striking in the 2001 data are the very low levels of life satisfaction (33 percent high), job satisfaction (37 percent high) and organizational commitment (38 percent high) reported by men in the "other" job category. These levels were substantively lower than their counterparts in professional positions. They are also substantively lower than was observed for females in the same types of jobs as themselves. These differences were not observed in the 1991 sample. Future research needs to be done to determine what has contributed to the erosion of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and the decline in mental health of men in non-professional positions.

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4.2 How Does Having Children Affect Work-Life Balance? Do Mothers' Experiences Differ from Fathers'?

The parental responsibilities of working couples are strongly linked to the incidence of work-life conflict.[17] Non-parent couples can act relatively independently as they do not have the constraints of caring for children. The addition of the parent role complicates the couple's life situation, however, as it places greater demands on them at the same time as it adds constraints. In this report the impacts of gender and parental status are considered simultaneously to accommodate the literature that suggests that "motherhood" is different from "fatherhood."[18] Virtually all the literature in this area notes that working mothers continue to assume a disproportionate share of family responsibilities and society continues to largely judge women's worth based on their performance of family roles (i.e., mother, eldercare giver, cook, homemaker) while men's merit is judged by their success as a "breadwinner." Rather than go on a diatribe on women's issues, we thought it best to quote from Vanderkolk and Young (1991, p. 45) who state the situation most eloquently:

> Even as women's attitudes and needs have changed regarding the world of work, corporate America has by and large been stuck in the '50s with a TV image of "Harriet" keeping the home together while "Ozzie" goes off to the office or the plant. The fact of the matter is that "Harriet" has now taken on both roles.

This section examines the link between dependent care responsibilities and work-life balance, employee mental health and attitudes toward work and the employer. We also examine how these relationships have changed over time. In particular we look at the impact on the work-life conflict of being a parent (see below), time spent in dependent care (see discussion in Box 9) and life-cycle stage (see discussion in Box 10).

To perform this analysis we first divided the sample into two groups, parents (children living at home) and non-parents (no children at home). Since, as noted above, the most current data in this area (Statistics Canada, 2000*a*) indicate that time in childcare and responsibility for childcare are associated with gender (women still spend more time in childcare than men and are still more likely to bear the main responsibilities for these activities), the comparison of parents to non-parents was done within gender (i.e., fathers were compared to men without children, mothers were compared to women without children).

Three sets of comparisons are presented in this section of the report. Work-life outcomes are shown in Figure 10, mental health outcomes in Figure 12, and organizational attitudes and outcomes in Figure 11. Key findings are highlighted below.

It Is No Longer Just Parents Who Are Having Problems with Balance

Work-life balance can no longer be considered an issue that is relevant only to employed parents or working mothers. Rather, it would appear from our data that the trend to greater role overload, higher family to work interference, poorer mental health, greater dissatisfaction with work and reduced loyalty to ones organization is characteristic of all Canadian employees, regardless of their gender or their parental status.

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Box 9
Impact of Time in Dependent Care

In the new millennium dependent care is not just a question of care for children. Concern over eldercare responsibilities (defined as providing some type of assistance with the daily living activities for an elderly relative who is chronically ill, frail or disabled) is now increasing as the parents of baby boomers enter their 60s, 70s and 80s. Demographic projections suggest that society has yet to feel the full effects of eldercare problems as the percent of the workforce involved in eldercare is expected to increase from one in five to one in four in the next decade (Statistics Canada, 2000*a*).

To gain a better appreciation of how non-work demands impact work-life balance, we examined the relationship between time in dependent care (operationalized as the total time spent in child care, eldercare and care of a disabled dependent) and work-life balance, employee mental health, and attitudes toward work. To undertake this analysis, we first had to operationalize time in dependent care. This was done by dividing the sample into quartiles based on the amount of time spent in dependent care as follows: (1) No time in care, (2) Low time in care (i.e., up to 3 hours/week in care), (3) Moderate time in care (i.e., 3 to 14 hours/week in care), and (4) High time in care (i.e., more than 14 hours/week in care).

Not surprisingly, this analysis shows a strong, positive correlation between time in dependent care and the incidence of high role overload, high WTF and high FTW. This association was observed in both 1991 and 2001, and supports previous work in this area that found that employees who spend more time in dependent care activities experience greater difficulties balancing work and family.

The analysis also revealed that there is a slight curvilinear association between time in dependent care and perceived stress, depressed mood and life satisfaction. In both 1991 and 2001, employees who spent no time in dependent care or a high amount of time in dependent care reported significantly lower levels of perceived stress and depressed mood and higher life satisfaction than their counterparts who spent low and moderate amounts of time in dependent care (note that the differences, while significant, are not large – approximately 2 percent). While the results for those who spent no time in care were not surprising, the findings for those who spent a high amount of time in dependent care are unexpected and suggest that there may be rewards associated with high time in dependent care that compensate for the higher number of demands.

There is no substantive association between time spent in dependent care and job satisfaction or organizational commitment (true for 1991 and 2001), which suggests that the declines in job satisfaction and commitment that we have observed in the data are not associated with time spent fulfilling dependent care responsibilities. Finally, high job stress has a strong positive association with time in dependent care (true for 1991 and 2001). This is consistent with the "spillover" model of stress (i.e., stress at home spills over to work and vice versa). It also suggests that some of the job stress people with high dependent care responsibilities are experiencing may be due to the fact that their higher need to be "home" generates stress and conflict at work.

Role overload and family to work interference has increased over the past decade for both the men and the women in our samples, regardless of whether they have children at home or not. Similarly, the percent of respondents with high levels of perceived stress, job stress and depression has increased while the percent with high job satisfaction and high organizational commitment has declined for parents and non-parents alike.

But Parents Still Report More Work-Life Conflict and Job Stress than Non-parents

While role overload and family to work interference have shown "across the board" increases, working parents, regardless of their gender, experience higher levels of role overload and family to work interference than non-parents. In the 1991 study, job stress was not associated with either gender or parental status. In the 2001 study, on the other hand, job stress was associated with parental status as employees with children were more likely than those without children to report high levels of job stress. This difference was observed in both the male and female samples. This

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Box 10
Life-cycle Stage

It is well-established that work-family conflict increases as one's obligations to family expand through marriage and the arrival of children (Higgins and Duxbury, 1994). The literature suggests, however, that many of these conflicts will decrease as the age of the youngest child increases. Karasek's (1979) demand/control model, which predicts that stress will be highest in situations where individuals have little or no control over the stressful environment, is often used to explain this phenomenon. Parents of young dependent children (especially mothers) are more likely to face higher, often unpredictable (e.g., day-care pick up and drop off, care of sick child) family demands than those with older children. These higher demands result in lower levels of control over the work and family interface and thus higher levels of work-family conflict. As the children get older the demands should decrease, resulting in increased levels of control and lower stress for the parents.

In this analysis, the concept of life-cycle stage was used to consider the variations in work and family-role demands encountered during adulthood. To examine the impact of life-cycle stage, the parent subsample was divided into the following groups:

- all children under 5 years of age (preschoolers),
- all children between the ages of 5 and 12 (adolescents),
- all children over 12 years of age but less than or equal to 18 (teenagers), and
- all children over 18 years of age and still living at home.

Parents with children in more than one of these categories were not included in this aspect of the analysis. Again, to take into account possible gender differences in the data the analysis was done twice: once for men and once for women. This analysis (data not shown) indicates the following:

- Role overload and Work To Family (WTF) conflict are not associated with life-cycle stage. In both cases it is having children that matters (see Section 4.1.2) not how old they are.
- Family To Work (FTW) conflict is associated with life-cycle stage. For both men and women the pattern is the same: FTW increases when one becomes a parent and peaks when one has children in their teens (1 in 5 mothers of teens and 1 in 10 fathers experience high FTW). At all stages of the life cycle mothers report higher levels of FTW than fathers suggesting that family concerns are more likely to preoccupy mothers or keep mothers from their work.
- Motherhood is associated with higher levels of stress and depressed mood, and lower levels of life satisfaction for women; fatherhood, on the other hand, is associated with lower perceived stress, lower depressed mood and higher life satisfaction for men. This trend holds regardless of life-cycle stage.
- Life satisfaction is slightly lower (2 percent difference) for mothers and fathers of children between the ages of 0 and 12.
- Life-cycle stage has little impact on how employees view their work or their organization. These perceptions are, however, associated with parental status. Parents are more satisfied with their jobs, more committed to their organization, and experience higher levels of job stress than non-parents regardless of the age of their children.

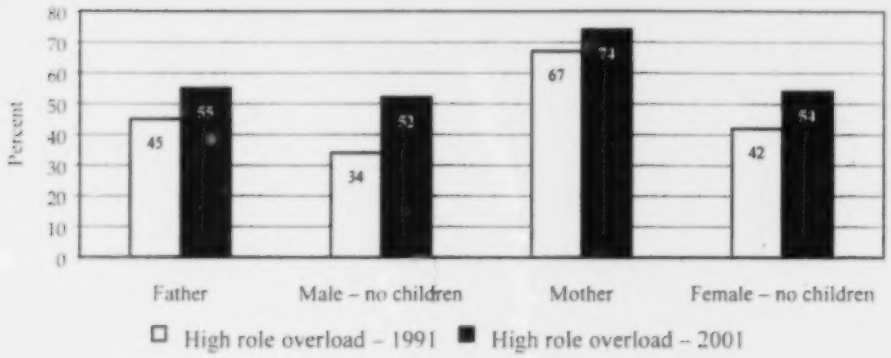
difference in job stress for parents is consistent with their higher levels of work-life conflict and supports research that suggests that there is negative spillover from work to non-work roles.

And Motherhood Remains More Stressful than Fatherhood

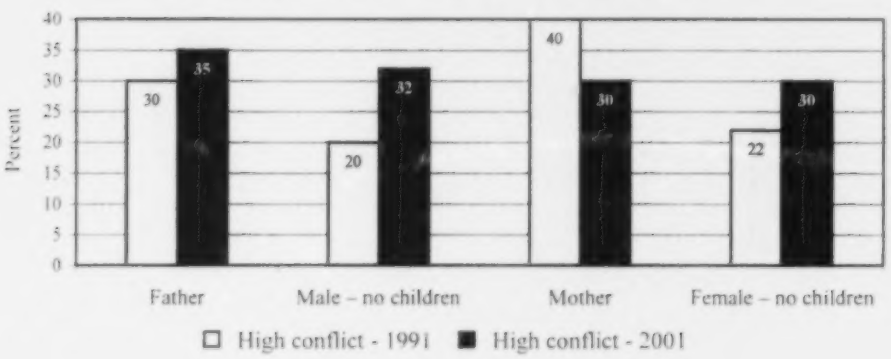
Despite an increased awareness of gender issues, efforts to more proactively manage a more diverse workforce, and policies and programs to help working mothers and fathers, for those in our sample motherhood remains more stressful than fatherhood, and mothers experience greater conflict between work and family than fathers. In both the 1991 and 2001 samples female respondents (regardless of whether or not they had children) reported higher levels of perceived stress and depression than male respondents, and mothers reported higher levels of stress and depression than females who were not parents. On the other hand, parental status has little impact on stress or depression levels for the men in our sample.

Figure 10
Impact of Gender and Parental Status on Work-Life Balance: 1991 vs. 2001

A. Role Overload by Gender and Parental Status



B. Work To Family Conflict by Gender and Parental Status



C. Family To Work Interferance by Gender and Parental Status

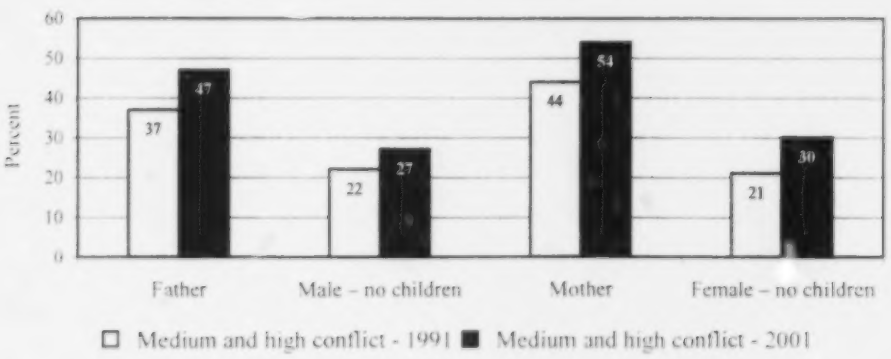


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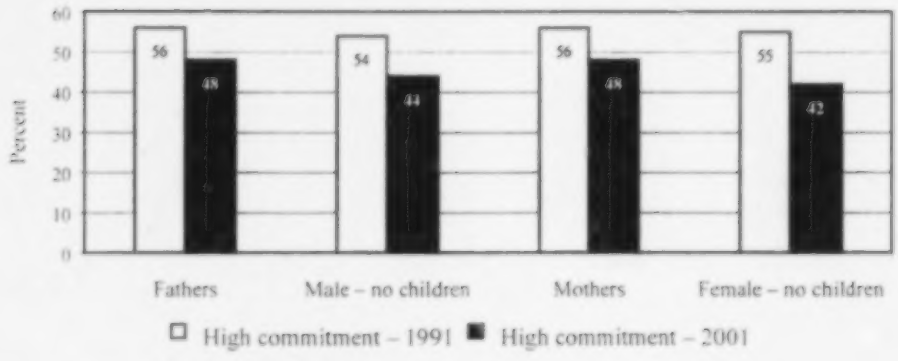
Figure 11
Impact of Gender and Parental Status on Key Organizational Outcomes: 1991 vs. 2001

A. Job Satisfaction by Gender and Parental Status

B. Commitment by Gender and Parental Status



C. Job Stress by Gender and Parental Status

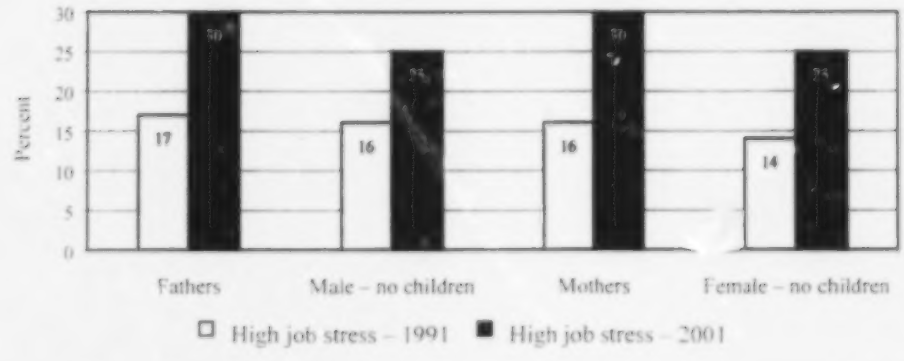
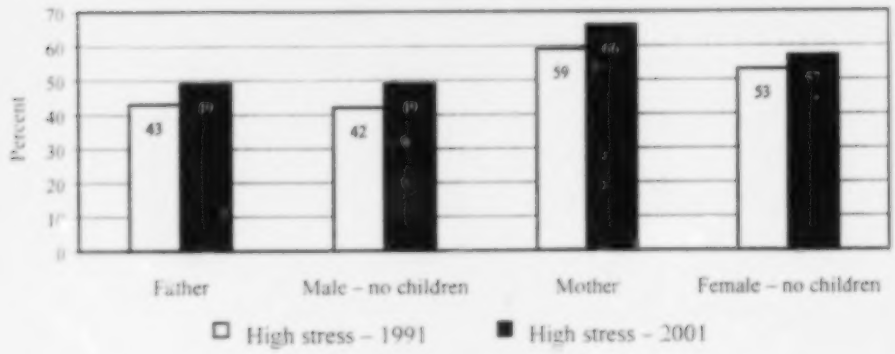
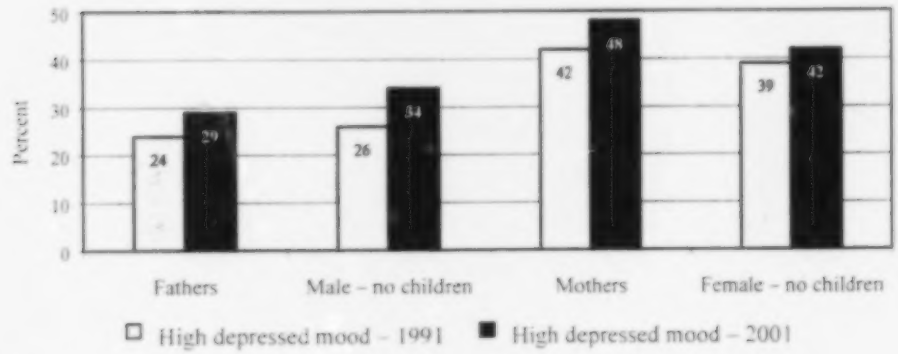


Figure 12
Mental Health by Gender and Parental Status: 1991 vs. 2001

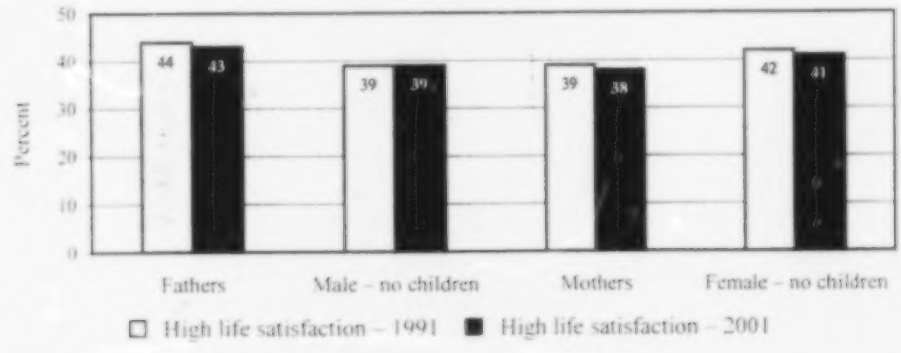
A. Perceived Stress by Gender and Parental Status



B. Depressed Mood by Gender and Parental Status



C. Life Satisfaction by Gender and Parental Status



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This suggests that professional positions and motherhood are not compatible in that they both impose heavy demands on their incumbents. Additional analysis (not shown) reveals that professional mothers experienced the highest levels of role overload (by quite substantive margins) in both 1991 and 2001 samples, with almost three-quarters of the professional mothers in the 2001 sample reporting high levels of role overload.

Interference from Work to Family Increased for All Respondents Except Non-professional Mothers

In the 1991 sample, work to family interference was a function of both gender. Parents reported higher work to family interference than non-parents and women reported higher work to family interference than men. In the 2001 sample however, work to family interference was not strongly associated with either gender or parental status with about one in three respondents reporting high work to family interference (regardless of their gender or their parental status). This change occurred because over the decade high work to family interference increased for men (regardless of their parental status) and women without children, but decreased (by 10 percentage points) for mothers.

These findings, while consistent with the trend noted earlier with respect to non-professional women, are difficult to interpret. There are no obvious demographic differences between the 1991 and 2001 samples of non-professional women (i.e., same proportion work part time, same age, same number of children). It may be that organizations have introduced policies and practices over the last decade that have made it easier for non-professional mothers to balance work and family demands. These policies do not appear to have assisted men or professional mothers, perhaps due to cultural pressures on employees in these groups to put work first and abstain from the use of such supports. This interpretation of the data is supported by the fact that the percent of professional mothers with high work to family interference was essentially the same in the 1991 and 2001 samples (approximately 40 percent high) while the percent of non-professional mothers with high work to family declined during this time period (data not shown).

Examination of data collected in the 2001 survey dealing with perceptions of the organizational culture (not shown) also shed some light on these findings. These data indicate that professionals of both genders believe that if they say no to more work or take a leave of absence for family reasons it will limit their career advancement. They are also more likely to indicate that family responsibilities make it difficult for people to advance. Such beliefs are associated with higher levels of work to family interference. In other words, the organizational culture in place in many medium and large Canadian companies discourages the use of family friendly policies designed to minimize work to family interference.

Non-parents Less Satisfied with Their Jobs and Committed to Their Organization

While job satisfaction and organizational commitment have declined over the past decade for all employees in the sample, the drop has been greater for those without children than for parents. In the 1991 sample, neither job satisfaction nor organizational commitment were substantially associated with an employee's parental status. By 2001, this had changed as parents, regardless of their gender,

reported higher job satisfaction and higher organizational commitment than their counterparts without children.

The fact that non-parents are now less committed to their organizations and satisfied with their jobs is consistent with the "multiple role theory" which argues that the more roles that one can have positive experiences in, the greater ones well-being will be. Proponents of this theory feel that the negative effects of problems in one role can be minimized if another role is going well.[19] In other words, stressful, non-satisfying work and non-supportive work environments can, to some extent, be compensated for by a rewarding family life or vice versa.

It should be noted that non-parents are more mobile than parents as they do not have the financial encumbrances of children. The drop in job satisfaction and commitment for this group could signal an increased willingness to change organizations and increased turnover. These findings are cause for concern as organizations enter the tight job market of the millennium!

Parenthood Is Associated with Better Mental Health for Men but Not Women

In the sample under study, when gender is taken into account, the declines in life satisfaction observed over the past decade associated with parental status are not substantive (i.e., 1 percentage point decline on average). What is interesting is that parenthood appears to have a different impact on the life satisfaction of mothers than fathers. For men, being a father appears to be linked to higher life satisfaction while for mothers the reverse is true (mothers are less satisfied with their lives than women without children). These differences were observed in both the 1991 and 2001 samples. Similar findings were observed with respect to depressed mood. Parenthood was not associated with the incidence of high depressed mood in 1991. In the 2001 sample, on the other hand, mothers were more likely to report high depressed mood than women without children while fathers were less likely to report high depressed mood than men without children.

These findings are consistent with the research literature that links responsibility for a role with higher stress and reduced satisfaction.[20] This research would suggest that in many cases fathers fulfill their parental duties by playing with the children (an activity that may increase life satisfaction and protect against depressed mood) while mothers look after more mundane tasks such as feeding and clothing children, etc. (activities that are perhaps not as satisfying). These data would, therefore, suggest that being responsible for parenting takes some of the joy out of the role! These data can also be explained using the "role expansion" hypothesis noted previously (i.e., the more roles that one can have positive experiences in, potentially the more well-being). These results would suggest that motherhood is not as high a "quality" role as fatherhood (i.e., dads do the "fun" family tasks while mothers do the "hard stuff") or that working women are less likely to have positive experiences from parenting than working fathers. More equitable sharing of child rearing within the family may lead to better mental health outcomes for working mothers.

Profile of Employed Parents

While work-life conflict and employee mental health issues no longer appear to be restricted to those workers with family responsibilities, the data collected in our studies indicate that this may be due to the fact that the challenges faced by non-parents have increased over the decade – not that balance has become easier for parents. In both the 1991 and 2001 samples parents reported higher role overload, interference from work to family, interference from family to work and job stress than non-parents. That being said, in both time periods, employed parents were more committed to the organization and satisfied with their jobs.

Finally, it is important to note that role overload is not associated with the age of the children living at home but rather with the amount of time spent in dependent care. In other words, with respect to role overload, it is not how many children you have or how old they are that matters but rather how much time you spend looking after them.

A Note about Working Mothers

The data collected in our studies are unequivocal – despite the labour market and social changes that shaped Canada over the last decade, working mothers still have more challenges balancing work and family than fathers. Our comparisons of the attitudes and outcomes of men and women with and without children reveal that the mothers in our sample reported the highest levels of role overload and family to work interference. Perhaps more importantly, motherhood is associated with increased stress and depression while fatherhood has no such impact on men. In fact, fatherhood appears to be associated with lower levels of stress and depression. These findings corroborate our earlier contention that the role of working mothers is qualitatively different from the role of working fathers and that these differences are having a negative impact on the mental health of working mothers. Further research is needed to determine if these differences are due to social, workplace or family factors (or some combination) so that targeted policies can be developed and supports implemented.

5.0 Why Should Canadians Worry about Work-Life Balance?

The 1990s can definitely be described as a decade of change. Work-life conflict has increased markedly, particularly role overload, reflecting the fact that a greater proportion of the workforce are experiencing difficulties balancing the competing roles of employee, parent, spouse, and eldercare giver. Employees have become more stressed, physical and mental health levels have declined, and people are reporting less satisfaction with life. There has also been a concomitant increase in physician visits, suggesting a decline in health. During the same time period, employees' attitudes toward their jobs and their employers have also changed. Jobs have become more stressful and less satisfying. Employees have become less committed and loyal to their organization and more likely to be absent from work due to ill health. Employees are also devoting a greater amount of their time to work at the office and extending their work day by taking work home to complete in the evenings and on the weekend.

In many ways these findings are not terribly surprising. The popular press and the media have been preoccupied over the past several years with things such as the "time crunch," "going back to a

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simpler lifestyle" and "coping with stress." Anecdotally, we know that people are having more difficulties balancing. Empirically, a larger number of researchers in an increasing range of disciplines and publications (such as business, psychology, sociology, economics, gerontology, nursing, social work, law, and human resources) are examining the issue of work-life balance. Organizations are now competing to be an employer of choice with respect to supporting working mothers and providing balance (i.e., *Working Mother*, *Forbes* and *Business Week* all have issues where they list the "___ Best Companies" to work for). Yet despite all this attention, we still see little concrete progress in this area – our data would suggest, in fact, that the progress we are seeing is in the wrong direction!

All three aspects of work-life conflict (role overload, work to family and family to work interference) have increased over the decade. Furthermore, our data indicate that no demographic group was unscathed – with men and women, professionals and non-professionals, parents and non-parents and those with dependent and without dependent care reporting increases. Role overload, having too much to do and too little time, feeling rushed as well as physically and mentally exhausted has shown the steepest increases. This is consistent with reports in the popular press indicating that people are too busy and time crunched. It is also consistent with the data showing that people are spending more time in work. We attribute the increase in role overload to greater work demands and expectations rather than more time spent in family activities.

The extent to which family responsibilities interfere with work and work interferes with family has also gone up over the past decade. In both 1991 and 2001 respondents were more likely to meet work demands at the expense of their family than vice versa. What has changed, however, is that a higher proportion of the population made work rather than family a priority in 2001 than did so in 1991.

It would appear that there is a real need for change in this area – but the question remains: "How does one motivate this change?" Many organizations have, for decades, ignored the moral case for change. Unfortunately, current accounting practices mean that the bottom line "costs" of organizational inaction with respect to work and family (i.e., reduced productivity, higher use of Employer Assistance Programs (EAP), greater turnover) often go unrecognized. The purpose of this section of the report is to provide an examination of some of these "hidden" costs by exploring the effects of work-life conflict from the perspective of key stakeholders (i.e., employees, organizations, and governments). It is hoped that the data presented in this section will familiarize business and government leaders with the business case for change.

5.1 The Costs of Imbalance

To determine how work-life conflict affects organizations, employees and Canadian society, we compared the experiences of respondents to our 2001 survey with high work-family conflict to those with low work-family conflict. High and low work-life conflict were defined in three different ways: (1) using the role overload data, (2) using the work to family interference data, and (3) using the family to work interference data. A description of the methodology used in this section of the report is provided in Box 11. The percent of the 2001 sample with high, medium and low role overload, work to family interference and family to work interference is shown in Figure 13.

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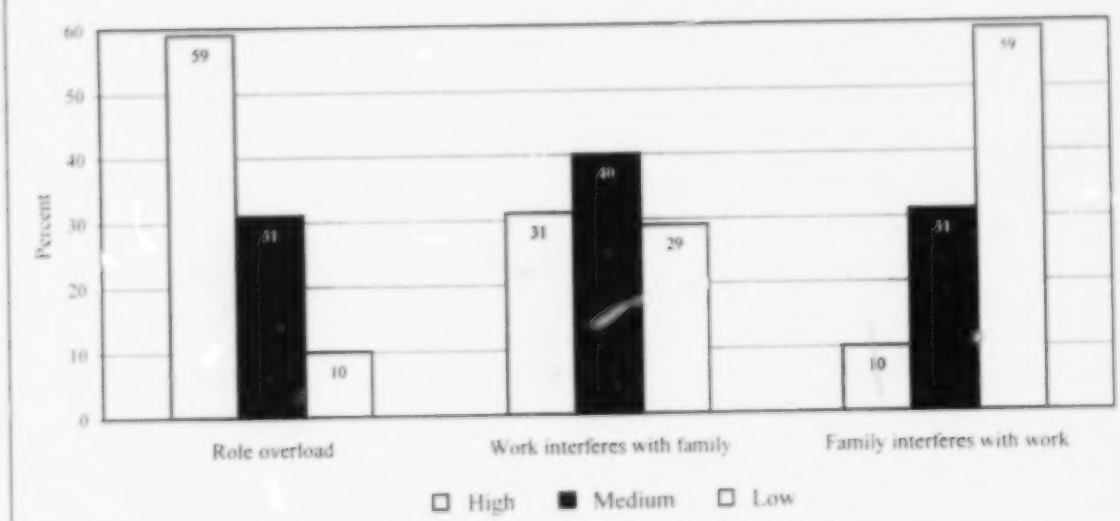
Box 11
Methodology Used to Examine the Impact of Work-Life Conflict

This paper looks at the impact of high work-family conflict in four domains:

- Work Attitudes and Outcomes (i.e., organizational commitment, job satisfaction, job stress, intent to turnover, absenteeism, use of organizational EAP, evaluation of organization as a place to work, need to purchase prescription medicine).
- Family Outcomes (i.e., negative spillover from work to family, family satisfaction, positive parenting, tendency to miss family activities due to work).
- Individual Outcomes (i.e., stress, depressed mood, life satisfaction, poorer health, use of vacation days for family problems, tendency to miss personal commitments due to work, tendency to go to work when unwell).
- Societal Outcomes (i.e., visits to a physician, use of health care system.

In all cases, well-established scales from the literature were used to quantify each of the attitudes and outcomes being examined (a list of the measures used are available from the authors on request). Population norms were used to divide the sample into three groups: those who had high scores on the construct of interest, those who had moderate scores and those who had low scores (see Duxbury and Higgins, 1998, for a discussion of this procedure). Chi square analysis was used to test for significance between groups. In most cases, the Chi square was a three by three analysis: high, medium and low work-life conflict versus high, medium and low attitude/outcome. With dichotomous variables (i.e., yes, no) the analysis was a three by two Chi square. Only part of these analyses is shown in the text (i.e., we show the percent high and low scores on the construct of interest but not the percent with medium). Given the large sample sizes, almost all differences were significant. To insure that differences were substantive (i.e., worthy of note) as well as significant, we focus here on variations that are significant at the 0.0000 level.

Figure 13
Work Family Conflict, 2001



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5.2 *How High Work-Life Conflict Affects Employers*

Total sample data that will be useful in interpreting the extent to which work-life conflict affects organizations are given in Box 12. Table 1 contains the actual data.

Box 12
Work Attitude and Outcome Data for the 2001 Sample

Percent of the total 2001 sample:	
• with high job satisfaction	45
• with high organizational commitment	50
• with high job stress	27
• who use EAP/counseling services	25
• who spent money on prescription medicine in a three-month period	54
• think of leaving their organization weekly	9
• who rate their organization as:	
◦ an above average place to work	55
◦ a below average place to work	10
• missed work time due to family problems	49
• who were absent from work due to:	
◦ health problems	49
◦ child/family problems	24
◦ eldercare problems	10
◦ emotional/mental fatigue	31
Average days absent in six months due to:	
• health problems	3.2
• childcare problems	0.6
• eldercare problems	0.2
• emotional/mental fatigue	0.3
• in total	4.3

High levels of role overload and work to family interference affects the organization's bottom line. Employees with high role overload and work to family interference are significantly less committed to the organization and satisfied with their jobs. They also report significantly higher levels of job stress, absenteeism (more likely to be absent and miss a higher number of days of work per year), EAP use, prescription drug use and intent to turnover. They are also less likely to rate their organization as an "above average place to work" and more likely to perceive it as "below average" – a key finding as perception of one's employer is strongly associated with recruitment and retention.

Closer examination of the data indicates that role overload and work to family interference have slightly different organizational impacts, with role overload being more strongly associated with poorer physical and mental health while interference from work to family is more closely associated with recruitment and retention.

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Table 1
Consequences of High Work-Life Conflict: The Organizational Domain

	Role overload		Work To Family		Family To Work	
Percent of respondents with:	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
			(Percent)			
High organizational commitment	47	58	42	61	--	--
High job satisfaction	30	60	20	60	33	54
High job stress	44	2	57	9	20	40
High intent to turnover (think of leaving weekly)	18	7	26	7	20	7
Missed work time due to family	54	37	55	45	75	42
Absenteeism due to:						
health problem	54	41	54	47	60	46
family problem	29	12	28	20	55	10
mental health day	39	18	40	26	40	28
eldercare	--	--	--	--	15	8
			(Number)			
Mean days absent in six months (total sample) due to:						
health problem	3.7	2.7	3.5	3.0	4.0	3.0
childcare problem	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.4	1.6	0.3
eldercare problem	0.3	0.2	0.7	0.3	0.5	0.3
mental health day	0.9	0.2	0.9	0.2	1.0	0.2
Total	5.6	3.4	5.7	3.9	7.1	4.2
			(Percent)			
Rate organization:						
above average place to work	48	75	39	72	48	60
below average place to work	13	4	19	4	12	9
Use EAP/psychological counseling	75	5	35	24	35	8
Purchased prescription medicine	65	54	--	--	--	--

Family to work interference does not have the same type of associations with the work outcomes that were observed with role overload and work to family interference. This may be due to the fact that this relatively small group of employees (only 10 percent of the total sample) put family ahead of work. For example, organizational commitment (i.e., loyalty to the organization) is not significantly associated with family to work conflict and the association with job stress is opposite to that noted with role overload and work to family (i.e., people who have high family to work interference actually report lower job stress – 20 percent high – than those with low family interference with work – 40 percent high). It may be these lower levels of work stress that enable an employee to put family first.

What kinds of costs do organizations incur when employees have high levels of family to work interference? From the organization's perspective, the main consequences of high family interference with work is higher absenteeism (especially absenteeism related to child and elder care) and a greater tendency to miss time during the work day.

5.3 Impact of High Work-Life Conflict on the Family

Total sample data that will be useful in interpreting the extent to which work-life conflict affects families are given in Box 13. Table 2 contains the actual data.

Box 13
Family Outcome Data for the 2001 Sample

Percent of the total 2001 sample:

• with negative spillover from work to family	46
• with high family satisfaction	52
• who engaged in positive parenting daily	52
• missed family activities due to work	52
• who find eldercare	
◦ a physical strain	14
◦ a financial strain	4
◦ overwhelming	12
• who have had fewer children because of their job	19
• who have not started a family due to work demands	24

Table 2
Consequences of High Work-Life Conflict: The Family Domain

	Role overload		Work To Family		Family To Work	
Percent of respondents	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
			(Percent)			
Negative spillover work to family	71	14	78	20	66	42
High family satisfaction	44	75	37	66	34	60
Missed family time due to work	63	28	81	25	71	46
Had fewer children because of work	78	4	45	18	20	45
Have not started a family because of work demands	60	9	36	25	6	65
Positive parenting	--	--	47	59	--	--
Eldercare a financial strain	--	--	--	--	15	2
Overwhelmed by eldercare daily	--	--	--	--	27	8

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The data indicate that employees who are overloaded and put work first (i.e., high work to family interference) experience negative repercussions at home. They report greater negative spillover from work to family (i.e., are more likely to say that their work demands are having a negative impact on their time with their spouse and children, their relationship with their spouse and children, etc.) lower family satisfaction, and a greater tendency to miss family activities due to work. Perhaps more alarming, lower fertility levels may also be linked to high role overload and high work to family interference as employees who are high on these dimensions of work-life conflict are more likely to say that they have had fewer children because of work and have not started a family because of work demands. This would suggest that employees who cannot balance their work and life feel that they have to trade off having children with getting ahead at work and/or an increased ability to cope. Role overload has a stronger impact on these decisions than work to family interference.

High work to family interference also affects parenting as respondents with high levels of this form of work-life conflict spend significantly less time engaging in activities associated with positive parenting (i.e., having meals with the family, engaging in fun activities with the family). This finding is consistent with the fact that this group is the most likely to say that they have missed family activities due to work.

The dynamic observed for employees with high family to work interference is very different from that seen for employees with high role overload and high work to family interference. While high levels of role overload and work to family interference are positively associated with the decision to have a smaller family and to delay having children, the reverse was observed with respect to high levels of family to work interference (i.e., those with high family to work interference have larger families at a younger age). It may be that these decisions have contributed to the higher levels of interference they experience.

Finally, those who have eldercare responsibilities are more susceptible to high levels of family to work interference. Respondents with high levels of family to work interference were significantly more likely to say that they felt overwhelmed on a daily basis because of eldercare and that they found eldercare to be a financial strain. These findings would suggest that high family to work interference may be more a function of eldercare responsibilities than childcare or work demands. They also indicate that family to work interference is experienced by employees who cannot find eldercare support in their community and have no choice but to meet eldercare demands at the expense of their work.

5.4 Impact of High Work-Life Conflict on Employees

Total sample data that will be useful in interpreting the extent to which work-life conflict affects employees are given in Box 14. Table 3 contains the actual data.

Again, the data appear to be unequivocal – respondents with high work-life conflict are more likely to report mental health problems. All three forms of work-life conflict have very similar negative effects on employees. Employees who are overloaded as well as those who experience work to family and family to work interference are substantively more likely to be highly stressed, report

Box 14
Employee Outcome Data for the 2001 Sample

Percent of the total 2001 sample:

• with high perceived stress	59
• with high depressed mood	38
• with high burnout	32
• who missed a personal commitment due to work	49
• who used vacation days to deal with family problems	50
• who went to work when they were ill	73
• with low life satisfaction	22
• who perceived their health to be poor	16

Table 3
Consequences of High Work-Life Conflict: The Employee

	Role overload		Work To Family		Family To Work	
Percent of respondents with:	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
			(Percent)			
High stress	70	23	77	6	78	48
High depressed mood	49	19	56	26	55	32
High burnout	48	5	63	11	40	29
Used vacation days for family	57	28	61	40	68	42
Missed personal commitment because of work	61	27	79	25	68	44
Gone to work when unwell	83	46	86	60	87	69
Low life satisfaction	26	14	34	15	35	20
Poor heath (perceived)	21	8	26	10	26	14

high levels of burnout, be dissatisfied with their life, be in poorer mental health, meet work commitments at the expense of their own health, and forgo leisure time to meet work commitments (i.e., miss personal commitments, use vacation days for family problems).

Of the three, high work to family interference appears to be the most problematic. Role overload comes a close second.

Moreover, work-life conflict can be linked to the use of Canada's health care system. Previous research by the authors (Duxbury et al., 2000) found that the incremental increase in visits to the physician that could be linked to high work-life conflict cost the economy almost half a billion dollars a year. The following analysis is of particular interest at this time as Canada's health care

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Box 15
Societal Outcome Data for the 2001 Sample

Percent of the total 2001 sample who in the past six months have:

• visited a physician	52
• spent time in hospital	6
• spent time in emergency	11
• sought other types of medical care	30
• sought help from a mental health professional	9
• had medical tests	26
Mean number of physician visits in past six months	3.0

Table 4
Consequences of High Work-Life Conflict: Canadian Society

	Role overload		Work To Family Interference		Family To Work Interference	
	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Percent who have seen a physician	56	49	55	40	--	--
Mean number of physician visits in six months (total sample)	3.4	2.0	3.2	2.2	4.0	2.2
Percent who in last six months:						
sought other types of care	33	25	36	27	41	4
had medical tests	30	18	32	21	33	18
saw mental health professional	11	3	12	7	23	4
spent time in hospital	--	--	--	--	12	4

providers are drained, health care facilities overextended and the amount of tax dollars spent on health care is increasing (Contandriopoulos, 1998). The data discussed in this analysis can be found in Box 15 and Table 4.

Employees with High Work-Life Conflict Make More Use of the Health Care System

Employees in our 2001 sample with high levels of role overload and work to family and family to work interference made more use of Canada's health care system. Over the past six months they have been more likely to have seen a physician due to ill health (associated with all but family to work interference), sought other types of care, had medical tests, and seen a mental health professional. They also made a higher number of physician visits.

While the likelihood of seeing a physician is not associated with family to work interference, hospital stays are. Respondents with high family to work interference were more likely to have spent time

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in the hospital in the past six months. These data indicate that the Government of Canada could reduce health care costs and reduce strains on the health care system by developing policies that make it easier for working Canadians to balance work and family responsibilities. While reductions in all three types of work-life conflict would yield cost saving, the data would suggest that family physicians would be the beneficiaries if work to family role interference could be reduced (respondents with high work to family interference were the most likely to visit their physician), while reducing family to work interference could have a desirable impact on the use of hospitals, the costs of medical tests, the use of other health care providers and visits to mental health professionals.

5.5 Why Should We Worry about Work-Life Conflict?

We have left little doubt that high work-life conflict is associated with a number of indicators of substandard organizational performance, adverse family outcomes, poorer employee physical and mental health and increased health care costs. The three components of work-life conflict do, however, appear to have different impacts that are worthy of note as they provide quite different motivations for addressing the issue as well as different prescriptions with respect to change.

Impact of High Role Overload

From the organization's perspective, high role overload is most strongly associated with poorer physical and mental health (i.e., high job stress, low job satisfaction, prescription drug use, use of EAP/counseling services and absenteeism due to mental or emotional exhaustion). Employees with high role overload are also more likely to experience negative spillover from work to family, less likely to report high family satisfaction (role overload has a more adverse affect on family satisfaction than the other two components of work-life conflict), more likely to decide to have smaller families and delay having children (role overload is more strongly associated with these two decisions than either of the other two components of work-life conflict). These data are consistent with recent research showing that work and family systems are highly interlinked and that negative conditions at work spill over into the home environment.

Impact of High Work to Family Interference

From the organization's viewpoint, high work to family is strongly associated with retention issues (i.e., high job stress, low job satisfaction, a greater intent to turnover, and unfavorable evaluations of the organization as a place to work). Not surprisingly, employees who put work demands ahead of their family were the most likely to perceive negative spillover from work to family (i.e., they perceive that their decision to put work first has negatively affected the time they have to spend in non-work activities and their relationships at home), miss family activities due to work, and to feel that their work is affecting their ability to be a good parent (i.e., this is the only dimension of work-life conflict linked to performance of the parenting role).

While all three types of work-life conflict produce negative mental health consequences, work to family is the most problematic. This would suggest that feeling pressured for time and feeling overwhelmed is not as problematic as feeling torn between work and family and guilty about meeting

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work demands at the expense of one's family. It will be recalled that men, fathers and professionals report higher work to family interference.

Impact of High Family to Work Interference

Respondents with high family to work differ in many ways from those with the other forms of work-life conflict. From the organization's point of view, the differences that are most critical include the fact that employees who put family first (high family to work) are more likely to be absent from work and take time off to deal with child/family and eldercare problems. Family to work interference was, in fact, the only dimension of work-life conflict linked to eldercare outcomes. Those with high family to work interference were more likely to find eldercare overwhelming and to say it is a financial strain. It is difficult from these data to determine if these types of eldercare issues lead to high family to work interference or if people who put family first are more likely to find it a strain to continue to work (because they need the money) when they would prefer to stay at home and care for elderly family members. Future research is needed to clarify what is happening here. Finally, it should be noted that people who are likely to put family ahead of work are also more likely to have larger families (data presented later) and not delay having children. Again, it would interesting to determine what is behind these data. Are people who put family first more likely to have large families and start their families earlier (and experience high family to work interference as a consequence) or is it that people who have more children and do not delay their families then find it hard to meet their work responsibilities due to higher family demands?

6.0 What Can Be Done to Reduce Work-Life Conflict?

To this point in the paper, we have determined that work-life conflict has increased in the past decade while employee physical and mental health has deteriorated and attachment to the organization and satisfaction with one's job has declined. We have also ascertained that high work-life conflict has a negative impact on the organization's bottom line, impairs an employee's health (both physically and mentally), reduces participation in and enjoyment of family roles and increases health care costs. Only two questions remain to be answered: (1) who is at greatest risk for each type of work-life conflict, and (2) what can be done to reduce the various forms of work-life conflict? This section attempts to answer these questions by identifying factors that the data suggest may increase or decrease role overload, work to family and family to work interference.[21] This analysis will help policymakers and employers design appropriate responses and interventions.

Factors in four areas were examined:

- demographic characteristics of the respondent (i.e., gender, age, marital status, parental status, eldercare responsibilities, age of children, family type),
- work environment (i.e., hours of work, job type, supervisory responsibilities, perceived flexibility of work, ability to refuse overtime, supportive management, supportive work environment),
- family circumstances (i.e., responsibility for childcare, family financial situation, need for respondent's income), and
- individual attitudes or behaviours (i.e., perceived control, attitude toward work, coping behaviour).

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6.1 *Who Is at Risk?*

Who is at risk? Quite simply, those with a higher number of family roles, those who devote more time to work, and those who have more responsibilities outside of work (i.e., childcare, eldercare, married). The data that lead us to these conclusions are given below. The results discussed in this section can be found in Tables 5 (predictors from the work and family environments) and 6 (demographic predictors).

Table 5
Predictors of Work-Life Conflict: Conditions at Work and at Home

	Role overload		Work To Family Conflict		Family To Work Conflict	
Variable	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
			(Percent)			
Working conditions/environment						
Hours at work						
Under 35 hours per week	58	11	25	45	--	--
35 to 45 hours per week	54	13	19	42	--	--
Over 45 hours per week	70	6	60	18	--	--
Supervise work of others	66	25	45	22	--	--
Job type						
Manager/professional	61	10	35	18	--	--
Non-professional	55	16	24	55	--	--
Family conditions						
Responsibility for childcare						
Partner	60	10	45	24	10	65
Respondent	76	4	30	30	40	43

Note: The table shows that 58 percent of those who work under 35 hours per week report a high level of role overload, versus 70 percent who work in excess of 45 hour weeks. Conversely, 11 percent of those who work under 35 hours a week report low role overload compared to only 6 percent who work more than 45 hours. The balance of the respondents reported moderate role overload (data not shown). One in four of those who work less than 35 hours per week report a high level of work to family conflict, a figure which jumps to 60 percent among respondents who work in excess of 45 hour weeks. The percent of the total sample with high, medium and low role overload can be found in Figure 13.

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Table 6
Demographic Predictors of Work-Life Conflict:

	Respondents' level of role overload		Respondents' level of WTF		Respondents' level of FTW	
Demographic Characteristics	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
Gender						
Female	64	9	28	38	--	--
Male	53	13	41	41	--	--
Age:						
under 25	43		13		6	
25 to 35	59		26		9	
36 to 45	64		33		15	
46 to 55	60		33		9	
over 55	50		32		8	
Marital status						
married	59	10	35	30	12	56
single	45	18	20	42	2	70
Parental status						
parents	66	8	33	30	13	54
non-parents	54	14	28	40	4	70
Have eldercare	61	56	33	25	--	--
Parents of children:						
under 3 years of age	72		31		20	
aged 4 and 5	71		31		20	
6 to 11	67		31		18	
12 to 18	60		35		10	
over 18	55		26		4	
Family type:						
dual career – children	65	6	30	29	15	52
dual earner – children	63	10	23	38	10	55
single parent	63	13	20	39	17	52
dual mixed – children	62	8	28	30	10	52
dual career – no children	58	17	25	50	3	66
traditional – children	47	14	36	25	8	62
dual mixed – no children	47	17	28	35	2	71
dual earner – no children	44	21	18	51	2	77
single – no children	43	17	20	55	1	77

What Factors Are Associated with High Role Overload

Employees in the following groups are more likely to be at risk of high role overload: women, employees who are in the "full-nest" stage of the life cycle, those who have a greater number of roles, and employees in dual-income or single-parent families.

Consistent with the empirical research, the women in our sample are more likely than men to report high role overload (just under two-thirds of the women who responded to the 2001 study report high

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role overload versus 53 percent of men). The relationship between age and role overload is "U" shaped with peak levels of role overload being reported by those between the ages of 36 and 45 (i.e., "full-nest" stage of life cycle, sandwich generation). It is not surprising to find that the more roles employees have, the more likely they are to have high levels of role overload. Additional analysis (not shown) allows us to construct a role overload continuum as follows: Married employees who are in the sandwich group (i.e., childcare and eldercare responsibilities) are the most likely to report high role overload (71 percent high), closely followed by married employees with just childcare (66 percent high) or just eldercare (61 percent high). At the other end of the continuum are employees who are married but childless (59 percent high) and single employees without children (45 percent high). It is interesting to note that men in traditional families have similar levels of high role overload (47 percent high) as childless members of dual-income families and single employees, suggesting that having a spouse at home full time to look after family role responsibilities does in fact make it easier to balance work and family demands.

With one exception (homemaker spouse), the type of job one's spouse holds does not seem to have as big an impact on the experience of role overload as does the presence of children in the home. Dual-income parents (i.e., dual career, dual earner, dual mixed) are the most likely to experience high levels of role overload. Single parents are also more likely to report higher role overload. Having a "stay at home" spouse who assumes primary responsibility for childcare and home chores is associated with reduced levels of role overload for the fathers in these families.

Employees who had responsibility for childcare in their family were more likely to have high levels of role overload than were employees whose partner assumed the main responsibility for childcare. The actual amount of time spent in childcare or eldercare was not, however, significantly associated with role overload. This result would suggest that with respect to family duties it is responsibility for the role not the time in the role itself that contributes to the perception of role overload!

Finally, it is important to note that not all parents experience the same levels of role overload. The data indicate that high role overload is negatively associated with life-cycle stage. Almost three-quarters of parents of children under the age of five report high role overload. This drops to two-thirds of parents with adolescent children and 60 percent of the parents of teenagers. By the time the child is over 18, parents' role overload levels are virtually identical to those observed for employees with no children.

What Factors Are Associated with High Work to Family Interference?

Demographically, those who are at greater risk for high work to family interference are different than those at risk for role overload. While women are more likely than men to report high role overload, men are more likely than women to report high work to family interference. This is consistent with research in the area showing that for many men, putting family ahead of work is a "career limiting move" (i.e., society still expects men to give priority to work).

While the relationship between age and work interferes with family is "U" shaped, peak levels are reported by those between the ages of 36 and 55 (versus 36 to 45 for overload). In other words, the time period when one is at increased risk for high work to family interference is much longer than

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for overload. This suggests that work to family may have a stronger association with the career life cycle while overload is more closely linked to family life cycle.

While married employees are at greater risk of high work to family interference than those who are single, the differences between parents and non-parents is not as substantive as was observed with role overload. Nor (with one exception) does children's age appear to make much of a difference. While those with preschoolers experience the highest levels of overload, high interference from work to family peaks when children are in school but cannot legally be left home alone unattended (i.e., when work activities cannot be easily meshed with school). The inability to reconcile the end of the work day with the end of the school day is consistent with the "latch-key" child phenomenon discussed in the popular press. Employees with eldercare responsibilities are also at greater risk of high work to family interference.

Family type is also a predictor of high work to family interference. The findings here are very interesting. While being in a traditional family (i.e., homemaker spouse) seems to partially protect the male breadwinner from high levels of role overload, the data would suggest that those in this family situation are at a greater risk for high work to family interference. The other family types where male and female partner are not "equally" employed (in dual mixed families where one partner – typically the male – is a professional and the other a non-professional) are also more likely to report high work to family. It may be that in these family types there is less of an appreciation or understanding of what the spouse does, what types of support they need and where their priorities are. It may also be that the males in these types of families feel an extra pressure to meet their family role responsibilities by achieving success at work. They may also be likely to feel that their spouse's job is of secondary importance (i.e., working for "pin money").

Finally, it is interesting to note that dual-earner employees (with or without children) experience lower levels of work to family interference than those families where one or both partners are in professional positions. This finding is consistent with those observed for job type and suggests that it may be the psychological demands associated with professional positions (i.e., involved with the job, pride in work) and the desire to get ahead (which can often only be satisfied by working long hours and being available to one's boss) that contribute to work being put ahead of family (i.e., preoccupied with work when at home, working late, bringing work home).

Role of the Work Environment in Predicting Role Overload and Work to Family Interference

Not surprisingly, both role overload and work to family are significantly associated with hours of work, job type and supervision of the work of others: variables that are themselves highly inter-correlated (i.e., those who supervise the work of others are more likely to be managers and professionals and spend more time per week in paid employment). The strongest predictor of both role overload and work to family interference is time in work per week (70 percent of those who spend more than 45 hours per week in paid employment report high levels of role overload and 60 percent report high work to family interference).

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The above analysis indicates that employers and policymakers need to know the demographic composition of the workforce in order to design appropriate intervention strategies. No "one size fits all" program will work.

Family to Work Interference Appears to Have a Different Aetiology

This form of work-life conflict appears to have a quite different aetiology than role overload or work to family interference. The following findings support this conclusion. First, while the demographic characteristics of those who report high family to work interference are in many ways identical to those observed with respect to high role overload, there is one important difference between the two groups – gender is not associated with this form of interference while it is strongly linked to role overload. Second, respondents with high family to work interference were less likely to have a spouse who had the main responsibility for childcare and more likely to have that responsibility themselves (the exact opposite situation to that reported by respondents with high work to family interference). These findings suggest that it is difficult to put work ahead of family if one does not have the support at home. Finally, none of the work environment variables examined in this analysis (i.e., job type, hours in work, supervision of the work of others) were associated with family to work interference.

6.2 What Can Be Done to Reduce Work-Life Conflict?

This section examines what the various stakeholders can do to reduce work-life conflict. Interventions at the organizational level are presented first, followed by actions that can be taken by the employee's family or the employee him/herself.

6.2.1 What Can the Employer Do?

The data presented in this section can be found in Tables 7, 8 and 9.

Our analysis identifies three ways that the employer can intervene to reduce all three dimensions of work-life conflict: perceived flexibility, ability to refuse overtime, and supportive management.

Increase Flexibility

As can be seen in Figure 14, employees who have greater work time and work location flexibility (i.e., find it easier to vary when they work, where they work, interrupt their work day and return, take holidays when they want, arrange their work schedule to meet personal and family commitments) report lower levels of role overload, work to family and family to work interference, even when hours of work are controlled for. In other words, employees with more flexibility can work longer

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Table 7
Moderators of Work-Life

	Role Overload		Work To Family Interference		Family To Work Interference	
Variable	High	Low	High	Low	High	Low
			(Percent)			
Work climate/work environment						
Perceived flexibility of work:						
high	42	20	12	60	5	68
moderate	60	9	27	28	10	55
difficult	79	3	50	16	12	55
Able to refuse overtime	13	54	18	46	25	46
Supportive manager	55	88	50	85	8	61
Work part time	--	--	15	37	--	--
Work a rotating shift	--	--	45	20	--	--
Contract employee	--	--	26	52	--	--
Union member	--	--	25	31	--	--
Socio-economic conditions of family						
Family financial situation:						
money an issue	68	8	36	28	12	50
live comfortably	59	10	28	33	9	60
money not an issue	52	18	25	38	7	70
Need respondent's income	61	9	86	70	--	--
"Off-shift" work with spouse			25	40	--	--
Individual characteristics						
High perceived control	54	78	50	70	52	65
View work as a job *not* career	45	25	36	25	--	--

hours without feeling overloaded and that work and non-work roles conflict with each other. Perceived flexibility seems to have the greatest positive effect on work to family interference, perhaps by allowing employees to better co-ordinate their work and non-work lives.

Increase the Number of Supportive Managers

Employees who work for a supportive manager – one who is a good communicator, focuses on output rather than hours, demonstrates respect for employees and supports their career development – are better able to balance work and family than those who work for a non-supportive manager (see

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Figure 15). Having a supportive manager helps employees cope with all three aspects of work-life conflict.

As Figure 15 illustrates, 90 percent of those who report low levels of role overload also indicate that they have a supportive manager. Conversely, only 55 percent of those who report high role overload say that their manager is supportive. The Figure also shows a very similar dynamic with respect to high and low levels of work to family and family to work interference. Perceived flexibility and supportive management are highly correlated - employees with supportive managers are also significantly more likely to have more flexibility around when and where they perform their work.

Table 8
Moderators of Work-Life Balance: Work Environment

	Percent who agree with this statement who have:					
Perception of work environment	High RO	Low RO	High WTF	Low WTF	High FTW	Low FTW
Organization promotes environment that supports balance	26	60	14	50	26	39
Organization's policies are supportive of balance	32	61	19	50	32	45
Manager supportive of balance	57	79	23	41		
Manager gives flexible work arrangements	40	66	20	42		
Co-workers supportive of balance	61	75	25	43		
Feel comfortable using work-life supports offered	18	33	19	47	20	26
Organization does not encourage use of supportive policies	35	17	40	19	41	26
If unable to work long hours will not advance	51	22	46	13	60	35
Family responsibilities make it difficult to advance	28	10	47	17	44	18
Not acceptable to say no to more work	56	22	43	22	55	40

Make It Possible for Employees to Refuse Overtime

Employees who can refuse overtime are better able to balance work and family demands. Whereas the ability to refuse overtime is associated with reduced role overload, this form of control really affects the extent to which an employee experiences high role interference (either work to family or family to work) (see Figure 16). The data would suggest that allowing employees some control over their overtime hours appears to be a particularly effective way of reducing high role interference.

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perhaps because it makes it possible for employees to schedule family time and deal with unexpected events. It should be noted that employees with supportive managers are significantly more likely to feel that they can refuse overtime work than are their counterparts with non-supportive managers.

Table 9
Moderators of Work-Life Balance: Coping

	Percent who use this coping technique who have:					
Coping mechanism	High RO	Low RO	High WTF	Low WTF	High FTW	Low FTW
Leave things undone around the house	90	30	91	69	92	77
Engage in positive coping behaviours frequently	49	83	30	20	30	85
Get by on less sleep	77	35	71	40	74	51
Cut down on outside activities	69	33	74	47	74	54
Covering household responsibilities for partner when their work is heavy	60	77	--	--	--	--
Buy more goods and services	55	50	58	40	93	44
Identify one partner as being responsible for family	38	58	40	29		
Leave work-related problems at work	38	76	27	66		
Engage in negative coping behaviours frequently	56	36	40	22	37	29
Modify their work schedule	21	66	17	25	37	19
Plan family time together	--	--	40	55		
Limit job involvement to allow more time with family	--	--	29	37	55	31
Plan work changes around family needs	--	--	30	38	49	31
Hire outside help to care for children	--	--	--	--	63	84
Rely on extended family members for help	--	--	--	--	38	26

Make the Work Environment More Supportive

An organization's culture also appears to play a role in an employee's ability to balance work and family. Employees who perceive that their organization promotes an environment that supports balance, has policies in place that are supportive of work-life balance, and encourages the use of supportive policies report lower role overload (RO) and lower work to family and family to work interference than their counterparts who work in organizations without these values. While these aspects of the culture have positive benefits on all three dimensions of work-life conflict, they have their most positive impacts in the area of role overload (see Table 8).

Figure 14
Perceived Flexibility as a Moderator of Work-Life Conflict

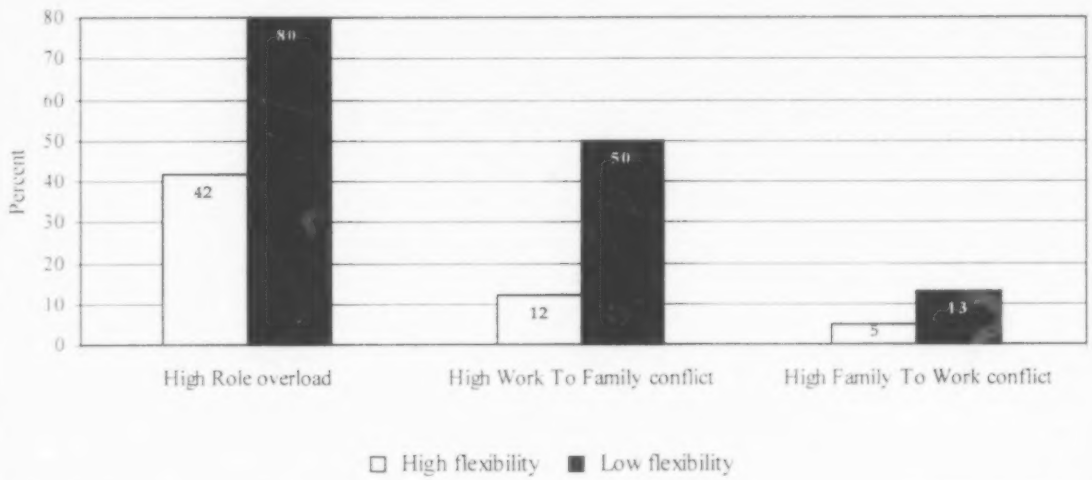

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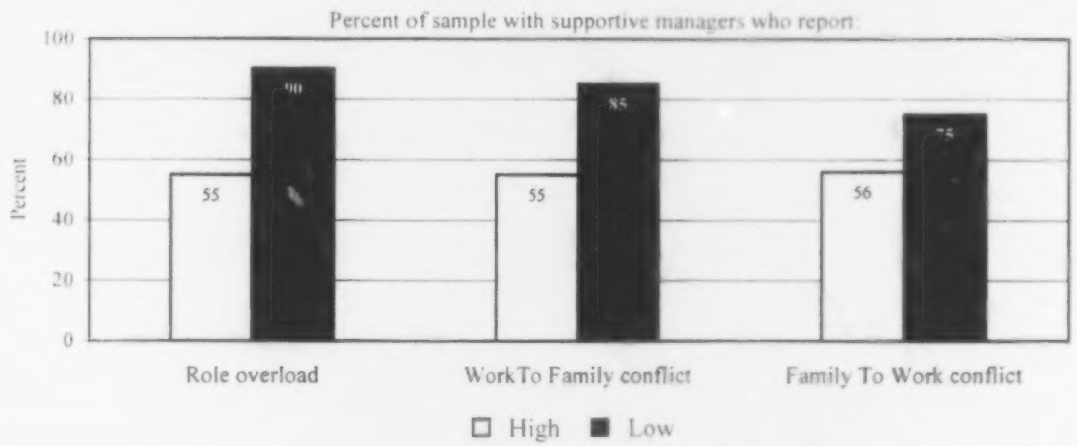
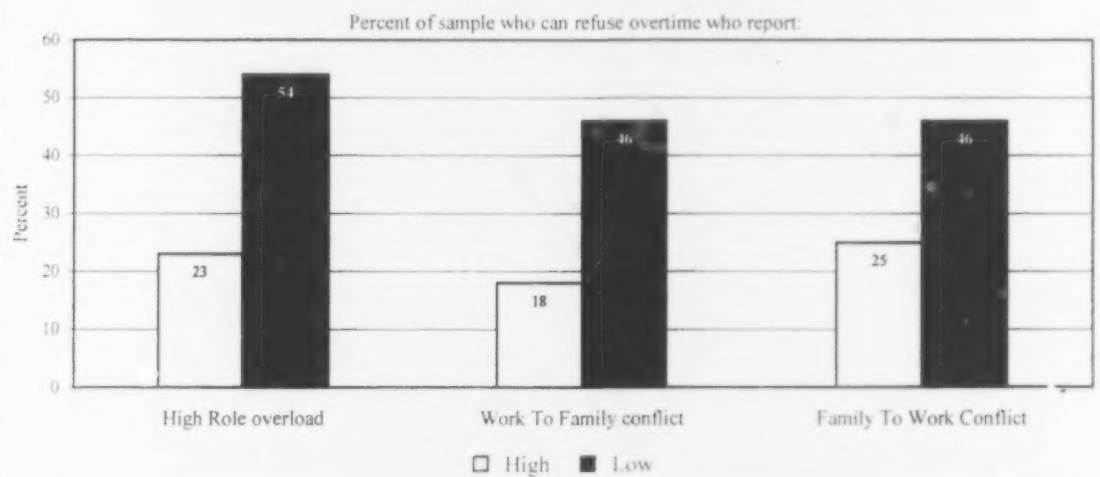
Figure 15
Supportive Manager as a Moderator of Work-Life Conflict



The organization's culture around "face time" and hours at work also has a large impact on all three dimensions of work-life balance. Employees who believe that they will not advance if they cannot work long hours, that family responsibilities make it difficult to advance, and that it is not acceptable to say no to more work report higher levels of all three types of work-life conflict. Employees who work for organizations whose culture focuses on hours not output (i.e., who believe they cannot say no, feel advancement is linked to hours) are more likely to experience more problems with respect

Figure 16
Perceived Ability to Refuse Overtime as a Moderator of Work-Life Conflict



to role overload and work to family interference. Those who perceive that family responsibilities make it difficult to advance are more likely to report high levels of family to work interference.

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In addition, employees who perceive that their organization is only offering "lip service" to the issue of balance (i.e., perceive that the organization does not encourage use of supportive policies, do not feel comfortable using work-life supports offered by their company) also report higher levels of role overload, work to family and family to work interference than employees who perceive that their organization encourages the use of such policies. While these aspects of the culture have positive benefits on all three dimensions of work-life conflict, they have their most positive impacts in the area of work to family interference. These data suggest that offering the policies is not enough; companies have to demonstrate that is it acceptable for employees to use these types of assistance. It should be noted again that managers and professionals are more likely to agree that the culture within their organization is one of "hours" and to disagree that they feel comfortable using the supports offered by the company. These findings have two important ramifications. First, they lead to greater work-life conflict for employees in these groups (seen earlier). Second, since managers tend to be the transmitters of the culture within an organization, the fact that managers hold these views (and probably behave accordingly) makes it more difficult for other employees to take advantage of supportive policies.

Again it should be noted that respondents' perception of their organization's culture around work and family depended more on who they worked for than where they worked. Employees with supportive managers were more likely to perceive that their organization supported work-life balance and focused on output rather than hours than their counterparts with non-supportive managers. Having a manager and co-workers who are supportive of work-life balance also appears to be key to role overload and the perception that work interferes with one's family. Such support is not, however, linked to family to work interference, suggesting that it is family demands and self-imposed constraints rather than work demands that contribute to this form of interference. This supports our previous conclusion that family to work interference is caused by quite different factors than are role overload and work to family interference.

Companies Have Other Avenues to Reduce Work to Family Interference

There are a number of work characteristics that are associated only with higher levels of work to family interference. The analysis indicates that employees who work rotating shifts are more likely to experience high work to family interference, while those who work part time, perform contingent work or are members of a union are less likely to experience these types of problems. The link between rotating shifts and high work-family interference is not surprising given that in many cases the work schedule of these employees (i.e., evening and night shifts) does not mesh with the schedules imposed by schools, communities, etc. Employees who work rotating shifts are often working when their families are at home. As such they are less available to their family.

These data also support the belief that part-time work does help employees balance competing demands. This finding is not surprising as those who use this work arrangement, by definition, spend fewer hours per week in work. It would appear that part-time work assists employees in balancing competing role demands by reducing the extent to which time in work interferes with the performance of family role responsibilities (i.e., reduces work to family interference) rather than by reducing role overload or family to work interference. Unfortunately, while part-time work may

increase balance, it often has a financial cost to the employee who reduces the amount of time spent in work (i.e., lower wages, fewer, if any, benefits).

The finding that unionized employees experience less work to family interference than non-unionized individuals is interesting and deserves further study. This finding reflect the fact that those who belong to unions are often in a stronger position to refuse overtime hours and work a regular schedule.

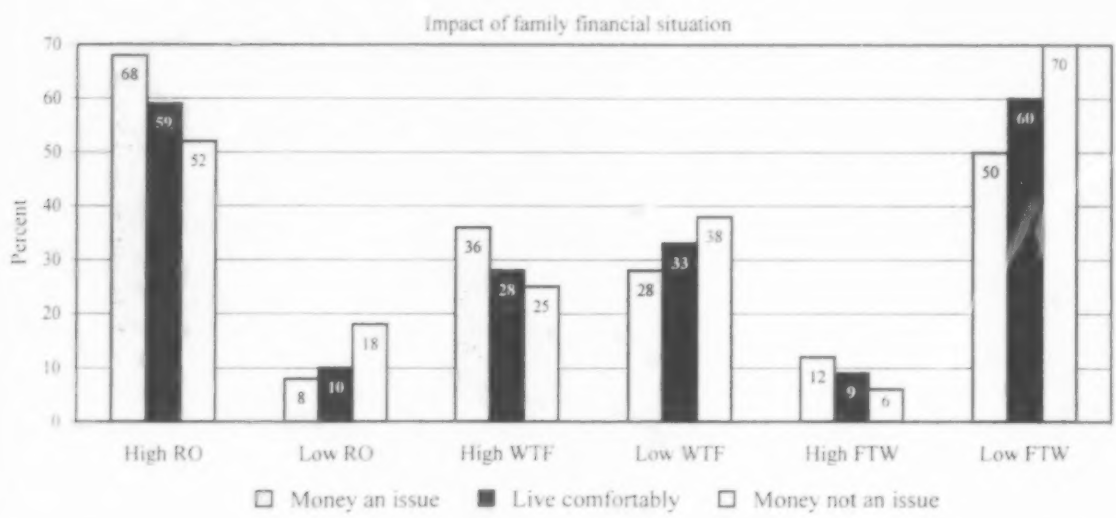
Finally, it is interesting to note that employees who work in contract positions are less likely to report high work to family interference. While at first blush this appears to be an unusual finding, it is consistent with the kinds of jobs contingent workers tend to take (often routine work with lower levels of autonomy and control), and the fact that these types of workers have little job security and low organizational attachment. These conditions have all been found to be associated with lower levels of job commitment, which is often associated with shorter work hours and a reduced tendency to put work ahead of family.

6.2.2 What Can the Family Do?

Its All about Money

While a number of "family" moderators were examined in this analysis, only one had a substantive impact on all three dimensions of work-life balance: the respondents' rating of their families' financial situation. As can be seen in Figure 17, all three dimensions of work-life conflict are more problematic for families where money is perceived to be an issue than for families where money is not an issue. These data would suggest that while money cannot buy happiness, it can sure help people cope with work-life conflict.

Figure 17
Families' Financial Situation as a Moderator of Work-Life Conflict



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It is likely that the relationship between a family's financial situation and work-life conflict is quite complex. Employees in families where money is "an issue" are less likely to be able to quit their job to escape non-supportive working conditions. They are less able to buy goods and services that make it easier to balance competing demands (i.e., flexible childcare and eldercare, fast foods, housekeeping, restaurant meals). They are more likely to work long hours for extra income. They are more likely to experience stress and conflict around "making ends meet." All these factors could, conceivably, increase the conflict between work and life. Unfortunately, it is unclear what families can do to increase their income beyond what they are already doing (i.e., most Canadian families have two earners already). This issue has, therefore, to be addressed by employers and by governments (i.e., adequate levels of pay is a public policy issue).

Two other family factors were found to have a moderating influence on work-life balance. Consistent with the findings on family income noted above, employees who indicated that their income was necessary for the family "to get by" reported higher levels of role overload than those whose families were not as dependent on their income. Respondents who said that they could "off shift" their work schedule with their spouse were less likely to report high work to family interference than those who did not use this type of strategy.

6.2.3 What Can the Individual Employee Do?

Perceived Control Is Key

The more control employees feel they have over their lives, the more able they are to balance work and family. Employees with high levels of perceived control are less likely to report high role overload and high interference between work and family roles. These data are consistent with much of the research done on stress (i.e., Karasek) and reinforce the importance of control and self efficacy to well-being. If control is key, the question then becomes, how do we increase perceived control? Our previous work in the area would point to many of the factors discussed previously in this work: supportive managers, flexibility around when and where one works, supportive work environments, and socio-economic factors such as income and education. Other work factors linked to higher perceived control include autonomy, empowerment, better communication within the organization, a realistic workload and self-directed work teams.

Attitudes Toward One's Work

The data show that individuals who view their work as a job rather than a career report lower role overload and less work to family interference. This is consistent with the data presented earlier in this report showing that the professionals in this sample are more personally engaged in their work (i.e., spend more time in work and are more likely to take work home to complete in the evening and weekends). These data suggest that the demands and expectations placed on professionals interested in pursuing a career (i.e., work takes priority, not acceptable to say no, focus on hours) are the antithesis of those associated with balance. It should be noted that while many of these expectations arise at the level of organizational culture, others are self-imposed. Organizations that do not want their professionals to burnout, have to take stress-related leave become less involved with their work

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as a means of coping with stress and work-life balance issues need to provide more support for these employees.

Coping with Role Overload and Work to Family Interference

Respondents use similar types of coping strategies to try and cope with role overload and work to family interference. Employees with these forms of work-life conflict were more likely to:

- leave things undone around the house (probably do not have time to do them),
- get by on less sleep,
- cut down on outside activities,
- buy more good and services, and
- engage in negative coping behaviours (i.e., use alcohol, drugs to reduce stress, try and forget about it).

The fact that these employees report higher levels of role overload and work to family interference would suggest that these strategies exacerbate rather than reduce these forms of work-life conflict.

What does seem to work? Employees with low role overload are more likely to (see Table 9):

- engage in positive coping behaviours (i.e., exercise, prioritize),
- cover household responsibilities for their partner when their partner's work is heavy (i.e., share workload within the family when either partner is overwhelmed),
- identify one partner as being responsible for the family role (low role overload associated with making the spouse responsible for the family),
- leave work-related problems at work, and
- modify their work schedule.

How do employees cope with work to family interference? While many of the strategies used by those with low work to family interference are similar to those used by those with low role overload, there are a few strategies employed uniquely by this group. In addition to the strategies noted above, employees who report lower levels of work to family interference are more likely to:

- plan their family time together,
- limit job involvement to allow more time with the family, and
- plan work changes around family needs.

In other words, what appears to work to reduce role overload are ongoing negotiations within the family around who does what and strategies to separate work and family demands (i.e., leave work at work, divide role responsibilities). These data suggest that employees who are able to minimize the extent to which their work interferes with their family do so by putting family first (i.e., limit job involvement), separating work and family demands (i.e., leave work at work), carefully planning what they do when, and scheduling time for their family.

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Finally, it is interesting to note that the strategy of identifying one partner as being responsible for the family role also appears to reduce work to family interference. In this case, however, it is the person who takes on extra responsibility who is more likely to report higher levels of work to family interference – the exact opposite situation to what was observed with respect to role overload (i.e., those with low role overload are more likely to give primary responsibility for the family role to their spouse). This is consistent with the findings presented earlier showing that those with high role overload tended to have responsibility for childcare while those who had high work to family interference had a partner who assumed primary responsibility for the family.

Coping with Family to Work Interference

Employees who have low family to work interference engage in a number of positive coping strategies (i.e., talking things over with family and friends, getting help from others, prioritizing, delegating, scheduling and organizing time more carefully). Strategies that are used more often by those who are experiencing this type of conflict include buying more goods and services, hiring outside help to care for children, leaving things undone around the house, getting by on less sleep, relying on extended family members for help, and the use of negative coping strategies. Interestingly enough, a number of coping strategies that were associated with lower work to family interference are also practiced frequently by employees who experience higher family to work interference. Strategies used by those in this group include:

- limit job involvement to allow more time with the family,
- plan work changes around family needs, and
- modify their work schedule.

All these coping strategies have a cost. Respondents who use such strategies to cope with family to work conflict could pay a price with respect to income, career advancement, etc.

The fact that the same strategies appear to be associated with reduced levels of one form of interference and higher levels of the other is very interesting and is, perhaps, linked to employees' ability to control one aspect of their life but not the other. For example, it seems likely that an employee can make a conscious choice to reduce work involvement, thereby reducing the level of work to family interference. Those with high family to work, on the other hand, may have no choice but to change their work to fit in with unyielding and intractable family demands (i.e., eldercare). In other words, those with lower work to family interference have chosen to use these strategies to reduce their conflict while those with higher family to work interference may have little choice but to use these strategies.

7.0 Recommendations

There is no "one size fits all" solution to the issue of work-life balance. The data from this study show quite clearly that different policies, practices and strategies will be needed to reduce each of the three components of work-life conflict: role overload, work to family and family to work interference. That being said, the data would indicate that there are a number of strategies and approaches that the various stakeholders in this issue (i.e., employers, employees, families, unions

and governments) can use to reduce of work-life conflict. Recommendations targeted at each of these groups are given below.

7.1 What Can Employers Do to Reduce Work-Life Conflict?

To reduce work-life conflict and improve overall quality of life, employers need to focus their efforts on four sets of initiatives:

- increase the number of supportive managers within the organization,
- provide flexibility around work,
- increase employee's sense of control, and
- focus on creating a more supportive work environment.

Specifically, we would recommend that:

1. Employers devote more of their efforts to improving "people management" practices within their organization. They can increase the number of supportive managers within the organization by giving managers at all levels:

   a) *the skills* they need to manage the "people" part of their job (i.e., communication skills, conflict resolution, time management, project planning, how to give and receive feedback),
   b) *the tools* they need to manage people (i.e., appropriate policies, the business case for support, training on how to implement alternative work arrangements, Web sites and other resources on how to handle different human resources problems, referral services to help employees deal with specific problems such as childcare and eldercare),
   c) *the time* they need to manage this part of their job (people management has to be seen as a fundamental part of a manager's role, not just an "add-on" that can be done in one's spare time – an overworked manager finds it difficult, if not impossible, to be a supportive manager),
   d) *incentives* to focus on the "people part" of their jobs (i.e., measurement and accountability, 360° feedback, rewards focused on recognition of good people skills, performance of the "people" part of the job should be part of promotion decisions, hiring decisions, etc.)

2. Employers need to provide employees with more flexibility around when and where they work. The criteria under which these flexible arrangements can be used should be mutually agreed upon and transparent. There should also be mutual accountability around their use (i.e., employees need to meet job demands, but organizations should be flexible with respect to how work is arranged). The process for changing hours of work or the location of work should, wherever possible, be flexible.

3. It is very difficult (if not impossible) to implement flexible work arrangements in organizations where the focus is on hours rather than output, and presence rather than

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performance. This means that organizations that want to increase work-life balance need to introduce new performance measures that focus on objectives, results and output (i.e., move away from a focus on hours to a focus on output). To do this, they need to reward output not hours and what is done, not where it is done. They also need to publicly reward people who have successfully combined work and non-work domains and not promote those who work long hours and expect others to do the same.

4. Employers need to create more supportive work environments. While the recommendations that precede this one will all act to make the work environment more supportive, we would recommend the following specific steps be taken by organizations who wish to focus their efforts on cultural change:

   - Work with employees to identify the types of support they would like (i.e., diagnose the situation) and which types could be accommodated within the organization. Not all supportive policies are feasible and practical in every context.

   - Develop and implement appropriate support policies. The development phase should include an analysis of the potential problems associated with the implementation of each policy and suggestions on how these problems could be addressed.

   - Communicate to employees the various policies that are available. Indicate how these policies can be accessed and any restrictions to their implementation. Repeat these communications on a regular (i.e., every couple of months) basis. Publish these data on the company's intranet.

   - Encourage employees to use the polices by having senior management model appropriate behaviours, conducting information sessions on the policies and how they can be used (i.e., lunch and learns), communicating how these policies are being used successfully by the organization and others (i.e., communicate best practice), etc. Employees must be made to feel that their career will not be jeopardized if they take advantage of supportive policies.

   - Measure the use of the different supportive policies and reward those sections of the organization that demonstrate best practices in these areas. Investigate those areas where use is low.

5. Give employees the right to refuse overtime work. While some organizations may want to give management limited discretion to override the employee's right to refuse overtime (i.e., emergency situation, operational requirements), this should be the exception and not the rule. Implement time off arrangements in lieu of overtime pay.

6. Employers should provide a limited number of days of paid leave per year for childcare, eldercare or personal reasons.

7. Employers need to make it easier for employees to transfer from full-time to part-time work and vice versa. They should introduce pro-rated benefits for part-time work, guarantee a

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return to full-time status for those who elect to work part time and allow an employee's seniority ranking and service to be maintained.

8. Employers should provide appropriate support for their employees who work rotating shifts. What is an appropriate support should be determined by consulting with employees who work rotating shifts. Policies that have been found to be effective in this regard include limits to split shifts, advance notice of shift changes, and permit shift trades (i.e., allowing employees to change shift times with one another).

9. Employers need to introduce initiatives to increase an employee's sense of control. The literature suggests a number of mechanisms that should be investigated, including increased autonomy and empowerment at the employee level, the increased use of self-directed work teams, increased employee participation in decision making, increased communication and information sharing, time management training, training on how to plan and prioritize, etc.

10. Employers need to examine workloads within their organizations. If they find that certain employees within their organization are consistently spending long hours at work (i.e., 50+ hours per week), they need to determine why this is occurring (i.e., ambitious, work expectations are unbalanced and unrealistic, poor planning, too many priorities, do not have the tools and/or training to do the job efficiently, poor management, culture focused on hours not output) and how workloads can be made more reasonable.

11. Organizations should consider offering Employee and Family Assistance Programs (EFAP). EFAPs differ from Employee Assistance Programs (many organizations offer EAPs) in that the EFAP is also available to the spouses and dependents of employees. As Rochon (2000, p. 149) notes: "EFAPs offer assessment, counseling and referral as well prevention services. They are generally used on a voluntary and confidential basis to identify potentially serious problems in their early stages.... Some of the varied areas that are addressed by EFAPs include job stress; anxiety and depression; interpersonal conflicts; legal and financial difficulties; substance abuse; traumatic incidents; family relationships including domestic abuse; emotional problems; grief and bereavement; self-esteem issues; and life transitions."

7.2 What Can Employees and Their Families Do to Reduce Work-Life Conflict?

What can individual employees do with respect to work-life balance? While the options in this regard are more limited than what employers can do (in our opinion many families are using all available options with respect to coping), we offer the following recommendations to individual employees:

12. Take advantage of the supportive policies available within your organization.

13. Raise work-life balance issues in your discussions within the workplace and within the community.

14. Educate yourself on how to deal effectively with stress.

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7.3 The Role of Unions

Unions have an important role to play in the establishment of family friendly practices in the workplace. We recommend that unions:

15. Become advocates of employee work-life balance by undertaking public campaigns to raise awareness of work-life issues and suggest ways in which the situation can be improved. This advocacy should be done outside the collective bargaining process.

16. Include work-life provisions in negotiations during the collective bargaining process with the objective of gaining new accommodations in collective agreements.

17. Set up educational campaigns to:

    - increase individual worker's knowledge of work-life balance issues, and
    - give employees the tools they need to effectively deal with situations as they arise.

7.4 The Role of the Government

There is a need for consistency with respect to labour standards and legislative requirements pertaining to work-life balance. For example, at the present time, labour standards legislation in most Canadian jurisdictions (exceptions include Manitoba and Saskatchewan) does not provide employees with an explicit right to refuse overtime. Similarly, many jurisdictions do not allow employees the right to time off in lieu of overtime (at present, only Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Quebec and the Yukon have such a provision in their labour standards legislation). Such standards would provide a starting point for organizations in developing workplace policies and practices that address work-life balance issues. We, therefore, recommend that governments implement legislation:

18. which stipulates that management rights do not include an implied right to require employees to work overtime, except in the case of an emergency.

19. that gives employees the right to time off in lieu of overtime pay.

20. entitling employees to up to five days of paid personal leave per year. This leave should be available on short notice and the employee should not be required to provide a reason for his or her absence. Such stipulations would give employees the flexibility to deal with personal/family matters with a large degree of confidentiality.

The government can provide assistance outside of legislation. We would also recommend that governments take the following actions.

21. As one of the largest employers in the country, the federal government itself should become a best practice/model employer in the area of work-life balance (i.e., introduce appropriate

policies, enact forward-thinking legislation, change accountability frameworks). Provincial governments should also take this tack. Such an approach will give governments the moral authority to ask for changes in this area from others.

22. The availability of affordable quality childcare services is, for many workers, a critical work and family issue. We echo many others when we recommend that the Government of Canada, in conjunction with the provinces, develop and implement a national childcare program that addresses the needs of children of all ages (i.e., affordable, quality day care, supervision for older children, before and after school care, extra-curricular programs).

23. Furthermore, in the context of a rapidly aging population and increasing life expectancy, and the greater need for working-age individuals to provide care for their parents or other elderly relatives, we recommend that the Government of Canada, in conjunction with the provinces, develop and implement a national eldercare program.

24. An elderly parent can require full-time care for a longer period of time than can be granted under short-term leave. This need is infrequently recognized. We recommend that labour legislation include specific language around long-term unpaid leave for the care of a parent.

25. Governments should also make it easier for family members who wish to stay home to care for their children or elderly dependents. At this point in time, such a choice often has negative tax implications for the family.

26. Governments should establish and financially support community based Employee Family Assistance Programs.

27. Governments should also contribute to work-life balance initiatives by:

- funding research in the area
- disseminating relevant information to key stakeholders
- developing and offering appropriate educational programs (i.e., educate companies on the bottom line impact of imbalance; educate employees and families on how to cope).

The data also indicate that families who have greater financial resources are more able to cope with work-life balance. The exact causal mechanism is hard to determine but is probably linked to the fact that families with greater disposable incomes report higher perceived control (i.e., can afford to leave a non-supportive work environment, can purchase goods and services that increase balance). This would suggest that one way to reduce work-life conflict is to find ways to make "work pay." Options in this regard could include tax credits, changes to the minimum wage, etc.

Finally, it should be noted that policymakers will miss the needs of real families if they continue to base public policy on outdated definitions of 'family.' Many policies are based on definitions of the 1950s male breadwinner family or on the idealized nuclear family of mother, father and dependent children. Changes in longevity, divorce, remarriage, and non-traditional family structures have changed what a "family" is: public policy should reflect this.

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7.5 *Closing Comments*

The growing stress on the working population caused by role overload and conflict between work and family responsibilities is both an economic and social problem. Productivity is impaired, costs of production are unnecessarily high, and personal health and family well-being are at risk. The dimensions of the problem have increased over the past decade. The stress affects both men and women in both professional and non-professional jobs. This is a societal issue. Individuals, families, employers and governments can all take actions to moderate the stress, and they can all share in the benefits if action is taken. Most of the actions are cost reducing in both the short and long term. All that is required is a shift in attitudes; a recognition that workers are family members and family members are workers. Canada relies on families to carry the responsibility for caregiving and nurturing their children, their elderly and other dependants. We also expect people of working age to work and earn their own living. Supporting them in meeting all those responsibilities is a positive sum game.

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Notes

1 This research was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the Department of Health and numerous private and not-for-profit sector organizations.

2 Throughout this paper the term work refers to paid employment.

3 Maintaining a National Health Care System: A Question of Principles... and Money (1996). Ottawa: National Forum on Health.

4 For a review of this literature see Frone, Russell and Cooper (1997 and 1992); Quick et al. (1997); Googins (1991); and Duxbury and Higgins (1998).

5 For a review of this literature see Frone, Russell and Cooper (1997 and 1992) and Appendix A.

6 For a review of this literature see Aryee (1992); Bedeian et al. (1988); Googins (1991); Duxbury and Higgins (1998); and Rice, Frone and McFarlin (1992).

7 See Quick et al. (1997) and Appendix A for a review of this literature.

8 For a review of this literature see Googins (1991); Duxbury and Higgins (1998); Jick and Mitz (1985); and Quick et al. (1997).

9 For a review of this literature see Bedeian et al. (1988); Duxbury and Higgins (1998); Karasek, Gardell, and Lindell (1987); Googins (1991) or Thomas and Ganster (1995).

10 For a review of this literature see O'Neil and Greenberger (1994); Duxbury and Higgins (1998); and Googins (1991).

11 See Bowen and Pittman (1995) for a review of this literature.

12 Two job types are considered in this report: professionals (employees who held either managerial and/or professional positions) and non-professionals (employees who worked in technical, clerical, administrative, and production positions).

13 For a discussion see Jick and Mitz (1985).

14 For a review of this literature see Quick et al. (1997) or O'Neil and Greenberger (1994).

15 In other words, we are comparing jobs while controlling for gender.

16 They replaced women non-professionals as the group with the lowest level of satisfaction with life.

17 See Bowen and Pittman (1995) for a good review of this literature.

18 The following references present arguments or data illustrating the different impacts of motherhood and fatherhood: Vanier Institute (2000); Statistics Canada (2000*a*); Hochschild (1989); O'Neil, R. and Greenberg, E. (1995). Patterns of Commitment to Work and Parenting: Implications for Role Strain, in Bowen and J. Pittman (eds.) *The Work Family Interface: Towards A Contextual Effects. Perspective*, Family Focus Series NCFR, Minneapolis, MN.

19 For a good review of this model and others used by academics studying work-life balance see Pleck (1995).

20 For a review of this research see Voydanoff (1995) and Haas (1995).

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21 These factors are referred to as predictors or moderators of work-life conflict. Moderators differ from predictors in that they can be manipulated or changed fairly easily by the employee, the organization, or both (i.e., work time and work location flexibility). Predictors, on the other hand, are either fixed (i.e., gender) or difficult to manipulate.

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